

School of Theology at Claremont



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• THE BIBLE PLAY •
WORKSHOP
BY
RITA BENTON



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HEBREW CHILD, WOMAN, AND MAN

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The Abingdon Religious Education Texts
David G. Downey, General Editor
GEORGE HERBERT BETTS, Associate Editor

The Bible Play Workshop

BY
RITA BENTON



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TO
MY DEAR SISTER KATE

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It is one thing to recognize the value of the dramatic method in the teaching of religion to children, and quite another thing to put this method into practice. There is no denying the fact that to lead a group of children to produce a Bible play requires more time and effort on the part of the teacher than to present the same passage in didactic or story form.

To dramatize in even the simplest form demands something of preparation, of planning, of technique. Many teachers would be glad to use the dramatic method more if they felt that they knew just how to do it and what to do it with. The purpose of the present volume is to help such teachers. The author, herself a successful teacher in church schools and an experienced user of the dramatic method in teaching the Bible, here shares with others from the wealth of her own experience.

Very little theory is found in this volume, but much concrete and practical detail is given. The writer tells how to lead children themselves to discover and make use of the dramatic possibilities of a Bible story; how to lead them to interpret the various characters and express their parts; how to coach the more formal presentation; what simple stage craft may contribute; how to plan and prepare costumes; what scenery to employ and how to achieve it; how to manage the lighting; what properties are necessary, and so on throughout the whole range of

the problems that confront the average teacher in the average church with the average group of children producing a Bible play.

The many illustrations used are all from the author's own Bible play work-shop and are therefore all the more interesting and helpful. One cannot read these pages without feeling that Miss Benton actually does the things she tells about, and further, that she *enjoys the doing of them*.

The editor believes that many teachers will welcome the practical helps here offered, and will desire under their stimulus to put to fuller and richer use the dramatic method in teaching biblical truths.

I. VALUE OF BIBLE PLAYS

PLAY-ACTING is a wholly normal instinct and a good one. It should not be thwarted, but should be developed in the best possible way, in pantomime, in song, in verbal expression. Children *will* have plays; therefore give them of the best.

Learning to work with the group.—The endeavor to express a character other than his own should be a source of growth to a child. Especially is it so in the case of self-conscious children. Compare such a child, in his first play, with his small, embarrassed smile, conscious of his audience, with the same child after he has served apprenticeship, and has learned that he is but one of a group, that his function is not to speak a piece, but to help to swing the story of the play with as much feeling as in him lies. He has learned self-possession and self-effacement—or should have.

He should also learn to speak clearly and with a sense of the value of words, their beauty and color, that they are a means of expressing thought, not merely cold little parts of a sentence. He should learn to hold himself easily, also many of the smaller courtesies. These are values inherent in the acting of every play.

Values in particular kinds of plays.—Fairy plays stimulate the imagination, possibly to create; they enlarge the child's sense of beauty. But a steady diet of fairy plays palls. The same is true of parable plays. As for mo-

ality plays, they may sometimes, if care is not used, tend to make the virtues disagreeable; the hero is so frequently a prig. And they are farther from reality than even fairy tales, for the latter often grew out of history.

Historical plays are often very charming. They may have a beauty of color and setting equal to a fairy play. Often they have the imaginative quality which so frequently colors history, alas! They do not always teach the child the most important part of history, the long sweep of cause and effect, the migrations of the peoples, the effect of war and of prosperity on the psychology of nations, the relation of plagues to economic conditions. But they do afford bright way-stations, colorful pictures of certain times and places which may serve as pegs on which later may be hung the completed fabric of history.

Not only is all this true of the Bible play but much, much more besides. I am convinced that no situation contains in itself such opportunity for beauty and for the cultivation of the imagination as well as of the historical sense as do the old Bible tales. What would stimulate the child's imagination more powerfully than the parting of the Red Sea at the wave of Moses' rod? And certainly he is learning history, the history of the Jewish people, closely connected as it is with that of Egypt and of Babylon.

Learning the Bible by acting it.—A child may almost learn his Bible by acting it. Beginning with Noah and the deluge, continuing through Abram and Isaac, Isaac and Rebekah and the pageant of Jacob, the pupil may then act out the story of Joseph and His Brethren, Moses in the Bulrushes, the Exodus from Egypt, culminating

in the story of The Golden Calf. The story of Rahab does not seem one to profit children, but they may pass on through the tale of Jephthah's Daughter, to The Call of Samuel, to David and Goliath, David and Jonathan, The Judgment of Solomon. Scenes from the life of Ahab are rather for children of a larger growth, but Esther and Daniel may surely lead to the New Testament with The Nativity, The Child Jesus in the Temple, the parables, The Prodigal Son, The Sower, The Good Samaritan, and others. Even the Passion Play may be attempted if carefully handled.

Memorizing through the play.—Thus the child will learn the main outline of the history of the Children of Israel; but not only that, woven through every tale is the beautiful language of the Psalms and prophets. Through the play "David" runs the melody of the twenty-third psalm; into the "Judgment of Solomon" may be introduced many a proverb; into the "Nativity" the prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea. The opportunities are endless. Thus the ear is receiving training in the memorizing of some of the most beautiful of all literature. Many a passage will go with the child through life and must surely tend toward beauty and sweetness of living.

Again, there is the cultural value of a knowledge of the old Bible literature. The child is made richer, for he will possess what he has acted; it will live for him.

Appropriating truth through expressing it.—But above and beyond all these benefits the value of a Bible play lies in its connection with reality, truth. The stories are stories of real struggles. They are not written to bring out a moral, but they are stories with moral value, because

they are permeated with truth, truth which is entirely unrelated to the question as to whether the Red Sea parted or no.

Freytag says, "Poetic truth is imparted to material taken from real life by its being raised above its casual connections and receiving a universally understood meaning and significance."

This, to me, is the chief value of Bible plays for us to-day. It is because almost every Bible story may be raised above its casual connection with the old-time Children of Israel and have vital meaning for us to-day. Perhaps all of the old tales have such significance; it may be because of it that they have lived.

"Mother," said a child, "do you believe *all* the Bible stories?"

"I do not believe everything happened just as it is told in the Bible stories," the mother replied, "but I believe that in every story we can find something which will help us."

"Mother," replied the child, "if you do not believe *all* the Bible stories you will go straight to hell."

When that child grows older and reason threatens to clash with faith, when he begins to question what he had taken unreservedly from his teachers, doubts, perhaps, that the sun and the moon stood still because Joshua commanded, may he not turn against the Bible and its teachings because of things which seem impossible to his belief?

But if he has been taught to understand the historical growth of the old biblical tales, how, after passing from mouth to mouth, from father to son for many genera-

tions, they finally came to be written in the form in which we know them to-day, he will be of a finer understanding; he will be more ready to search out the reason that the tale has lived.

An experiment and its lesson.—At the opening of Sunday school each year send five children out of the room, and tell a simple three- or four-minute tale to the others, a tale new to them. After the telling, let one child leave the room and relate the story as she remembers it, to one of the children outside. Let him tell it to the second, he to the third, he to the fourth, and he to the fifth. Then have the fifth child return and relate to the class the story as he received it. It is an interesting experiment.

I told this story from Tolstoy: Once there were three brothers. The name of the elder was Simon; he was a soldier and made his living by war and by killing other men. The name of the second brother was Taras; he was a merchant and lived by trade and frequently by the cheating of others. The name of the third brother was Ivan; he was a farmer and made his living by the labor of his hands and the sweat of his brow. Well, the soldier went out to battle, but he was conquered and had to run homeward, and the merchant risked all his gold and lost it, and they agreed together saying, "Let us go and ask bread of Ivan the fool." So they came back home and Ivan the fool whom they had jeered at, supported and took care of them for the rest of their days.

The following is the same tale as related by the fifth child after it had passed through the minds and mouths of the other four: Once there were three brothers, and one of them was very wicked; he made everybody work.

The value of this experiment is that it shows the children how stories lose and gain in transmission. Therefore in the giving of Bible plays stress not the mere incidents of the tale but the poetic truth which is of all time.

Each will find his own truth. Abraham wished to obey God; he prayed for light and understanding and it was given him in time to save his son, Isaac. The Israelites, coming out of bondage, imbibed from the nations who followed other gods, their ideas as to God's pleasure in human sacrifice. The sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter was the fruit of this mistaken idea. The story of Daniel? Will God to-day shut the lions' mouths? What matter? So few of us are apt to meet that particular situation. But the poetic truth is there, the struggle of the Jews throughout all history—and not of the Jews only: Do what is wrong to save your skin, or do the right, scorning consequences, knowing that they will never afflict as would your weakness.

The dramatic touches a deep need in human nature

—Drama has its origin in the instinct of worship and reverence and should be, as it increasingly is, part of the churches' teaching.

Everyone knows how Greek drama sprang from the worship of Bromios, son of Zeus most high, and how the mediæval miracle play was brought into being by the church for the teaching of the people. The earliest play in the English language of which we have record was sung at Easter tide by the vested brethren, and represented the garden of the resurrection. And the angel sang: "He is not here; he is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Easter lesson in drama.—This year's Easter play in one church gave to some little children their first glimpse of the story of Easter. It was called "Coming Down the Mount" and discovered the people descending the hillside after the Sermon on the Mount. In the following scene the priests appeared before Pilate vehemently demanding the death of Jesus, as a result of his preaching, while the crowd in the background shouted: "Crucify him." And in the concluding scene, the "first day of the week," Mary of Magdala appears and relates to unbelieving priest and Pharisee the Easter story, while little children pass with waving palms, crying, "Hosanna! The Christ is risen!"

As preparation for this play the older children read carefully the Sermon on the Mount, and surely learned much of its teaching. There is a dim possibility that it may enter in and color the lives both of actor and teacher.

Lasting possessions.—The ordinary play may be forgotten, but the biblical play is constantly recalled by association. You will never hear the familiar passages read in church, or sung, without feeling a warm, intimate sense of possession, the best sort of possession, for it does not exclude anyone else. "The Lord is my shepherd" brings to mind a small figure clad in a sheepskin, singing valiantly against a background of fierce red-clad Philistines. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pitchers of silver" recalls a tiny girl in long blue robe and veil, shyly offering the ten-year-old Solomon a silver basket piled high with oranges.

These pictures may not equal those of the old

masters, but they are your own and dear from the association.

The proper giving of one play should be a sufficient answer to the objection still existing in some quarters to giving plays from the Bible, for Bible plays surely enshrine the "good, the beautiful, the true." After acting in "Daniel" and the "Burning Fiery Furnace," the child should feel increased admiration for steadfastness and courage; after "Ruth" for gentleness and affection, after "The Good Samaritan" for loving compassion.

Therefore you who hesitate before the fancied difficulties of giving a Bible play, learn that they are as nothing compared to the joys, for you are building up lasting memories of pleasant things. And the children are laying up in their hearts and minds treasures whose value will increase as they grow on into life's deeper experiences.

II. DRAMATIC USE OF BIBLE STORIES

THERE are several ways of using the Bible dramatically in telling the Bible story. The simplest way is to select certain children and bid them represent the characters as called upon. Esther, Joseph, David, stories with much action, are the best for this purpose. Furnish only absolutely essential properties.

Spontaneous rendering.—For example, bring a crown, and possibly veils for the maidens, if the story be Esther. Tell the story, summoning the children to act it out as best they may, as you narrate. The king may stand, holding the royal crown, as the little girls advance, each in turn kneeling and throwing back her veil. The king may reject each maid to suit himself, or may repeat suggested words until Esther appears. She kneels; he crowns her. The class may shout: "Long live the queen!" They go off together. Continue the story until Haman commands that all men bow before him. Let the class stand and bow, with the exception of Mordecai. Tell on until Haman is commanded by the king to lead Mordecai in honor about the city. While he leads him through the streets of the city (the classroom) let the class repeat his words: "Thus shall be done to the man the king delighteth to honor." If you like, set three goblets on a table and summon Esther, Haman, and Mordecai to sit. Then let Esther rise pointing toward Haman as you denounce him. The eager soldiers drag him

to his doom, and Mordecai, kneeling, receives a ring. At the conclusion let the class sing "Old Hundred."

As a modification of this method, the story may first be told through to the end and the children then allowed to act it out. By either of these methods the story at least commands the child's interest and concentration.

Rendering with the help of simple suggestions and no rehearsals.—Another way is to take apart those who are to act out the story. Tell it to them, suggesting as little as possible what they shall say. If there be time, or if the children are very intelligent and well trained to think for themselves, they can render a simple story. But even the little ones may try to think for themselves, for in this, training consists. The following is the result—a very crude result—of fifteen minutes' work with twenty small boys of six, seven, and eight years. It is the story of the strife of the herdsmen of Lot and Abram. The children were taught the concluding verse, as the essence of the story, in advance. They were divided into Lot, Abram, herdsmen of Lot, and herdsmen of Abram.

(Enter the HERDSMEN of LOT followed by the HERDSMEN of ABRAM.)

ABRAM'S HERDSMEN (*to LOT'S HERDSMEN*): What're you doing in this field? This is *our* field!

LOT'S HERDSMEN: No, it isn't! It's *our* field!

ABRAM'S HERDSMEN: It isn't either! You get out of here! (*Pressing closer.*)

LOT'S HERDSMEN: It is too! *You* get out!

ABRAM'S HERDSMEN: We won't! (*Struggle between the HERDSMEN.*)

ONE HERDSMAN: There comes Lot!

(Enter Lot.)

LOT'S HERDSMAN: O Lot, this is our field, isn't it? And Abram's herdsmen tell us to get out.

ABRAM'S HERDSMEN: No, it isn't! It's *our* field.

LOT'S HERDSMEN: We were here first.

LOT (*dubiously, scratching his head*): Tell you what: we will ask Abram.

HERDSMAN: There he comes!

(Enter ABRAM.)

LOT: O Abram, our herdsmen are fighting about the fields. Mine say it's our field, and yours say it's your field, and what are we going to do about it?

ABRAM: Choose the field you want and I will take the other. See, the whole country is before you, and "*let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, and between thy herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we be brethren.*"

(*The class repeats the quotation as the actors take their seats.*)

Rendering with help of scenes sketched and rehearsals.

—At Christmas time a more difficult subject was treated. The children came to several rehearsals. Joseph was twelve, Mary, eleven, the others from six to ten. They were absolutely unaccustomed to create. The response at first was very slow.

The presumable scenes were sketched by the coach as follows:

Scene I: Wise men appear before Herod.

Scene II: Angel appears to shepherds.

Scene III: Inn at Bethlehem, stable adjoining.

SCENARIO

SCENE I: Herod's Hall. HEROD enters, summons SOLDIER to usher in wise KINGS. They tell their tale. HEROD sends for his COUNSELORS. They quote prophecy about Bethlehem. KINGS and COUNSELORS go. HEROD bids SOLDIER follow and slay Bethlehem children.

SCENE II: The hillside. SHEPHERDS addressed by ANGEL. They decide to go to Bethlehem.

SCENE III: The Inn. MARY and JOSEPH arrive. INNKEEPER sends them to stable. They lie down. Darkness. "Silent Night" sung by class. Light. Child is seen in manger. They talk of him. JOSEPH sleeps. SHEPHERDS from afar exclaim over light, enter, marvel at BABY, tell of ANGEL's appearing, offer gifts, point out coming of KINGS. KINGS enter, ask about BABY, tell about star, offer gifts, announce return to HEROD. JOSEPH wakes and tells of dream. All go. INNKEEPER enters with SOLDIER. SOLDIER relates HEROD's command. INNKEEPER pokes fun at HEROD for thinking a king of the Jews could be born in *his* stable.

At the first rehearsal the story was part told, part read to the children. (It is probably better merely to tell the tale at first.) They were asked to find the beginning, the middle, and the end. At first the birth of Christ was chosen for all three, but gradually it found its place as the center, or climax. (One difficulty in dramatizing a "Nativity" is that the story lacks plot; but, surely, it may arouse an "emotional response.") Children like to begin at the very beginning, so Scene I was shifted back to the meeting of the Wise Men in the desert, where they

beheld the star. If the children had been told of the Annunciation to Mary, or of the prophecies of Isaiah, the beginning would probably have been shifted still farther into the past.

They were then asked to think out the play. The following is the draft of an eight-year-old king:

Play: First scene:

(Joseph) What a nice baby!

(Mary) We shall call our baby Jesus.

(Shepherds in the desert talking of the babe Christ that has been born)

(first shepherd) let us go find him who is born this night (second shepherd) Yes let us go for it is so written by the prophets.

(Third shepherd) yes let us go. another part now

Second scene

(Three wise kings before Herod first king asking Where Christ is to be found)

(First king) Where is the Christ child to be found

(King Herod) The Christ child is to be found in Bethlehem of Judæa for thus it is written by the prophet.

(The three wise men leave and follow the star with their arms up with gifts for the babe Christ)

(King Herod) Soldiers go kill all the babies in Bethlehem.

Another part

Third scene

(Joseph and Mary trying to find a place to sleep)

(Innkeeper) You may not come in because the inn is

full of people but there is a stall in the stable) (Mary) thank you (Joseph) for your kindness.

After discussing the outline we threw away pencils; three small boys, the kings, separated to different corners and approached one another as through the desert. They met and plunged into conversation. (An attempt was made to show that some form of greeting would be used, so they condescended to bow low to one another with hand raised high.)

Throughout this attempt the children paraphrased fairly readily, but the creative work was slow. I have indicated where they paraphrased and where the thought was original.

SCENE I. *The desert*

(KINGS *enter from separate corners and bow low.*)

FIRST KING: Who are you?

SECOND KING: I am King Melchior from the Indies.

(*Names and places suggested.*) Who are ye?

THIRD KING: I am King Jasper from Persia. Who are you?

FIRST KING: I am King Balthazar from the Far East.

SECOND KING: Where are you going?

THIRD KING: I go to seek the Christ, the babe Christ.

FIRST KING: I go to seek Christ too. (*Suggested that astonishment might be indicated by the repetition of the word "Christ." Whereupon both kings repeat it twice.*) The Christ? The Christ? I go to seek Christ too—King of the Jews!

SECOND KING: The Christ!! The Christ!!! I go to seek Christ too—King of all the world,

THIRD KING: Let us go together!

ALL TOGETHER: The star will guide us. (*For this purpose the ANGEL OF THE STAR was brought in. It was decided she should enter first and proceed before them.*)

(*All start after her, holding their gifts on high, and singing, one boy suggested, "We Three Kings of Orient Are."*)

Nothing very original so far!

SCENE II. Court of King Herod

(*As the chapel was used, it was necessary for HEROD'S pages to bring in chair covered with velvet for throne. Then two soldiers marched in and took position. Militarism had evidently not been bred in them to judge by their methods of marching and carrying spears. A few minutes were spent in getting them to march in time.*)

HEROD enters, his pages carrying his train. He claps. (*Method of calling servants was suggested.*) The pages bow. (*Very difficult to remember.*)

HEROD: Go call my counselors.

PAGES (*start off. They are recalled and asked to answer the king. Do they obey or not?*) We obey! (*They start off. Again recalled. It is suggested that they address the king.*) We obey, O king! (*They go.*)

(*PAGES reenter with COUNSELORS. COUNSELORS bow low.*)

HEROD: Can you tell me where the babe Christ is to be born?

FIRST COUNSELOR: In Bethlehem of Judæa, for thus it is written in the prophets: (*All the COUNSELORS join in, having learned this part by heart.*) And thou, Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor who shall rule my people Israel.

HEROD: You may go now. (*They go.*) (*To PAGES.*)
Go, call my wise kings!

PAGES (*lessoned by previous experience*): We obey, O king! (*They run off down aisle and return immediately leading three kings by the hand. Suggested that they announce the three kings. They precede the kings down the aisle, holding one hand aloft and crying.*)
Here come the three kings from the East! Here come the three kings from the East!

FIRST KING: Can you tell me where (*Suggested they bow before Herod, they bow ceremoniously.*)—Can you tell me where the babe Christ is to be born?

SECOND KING: King of the Jews—

THIRD KING: King of all the world!

HEROD: In Bethlehem of Judæa! Go and seek the child and when ye have found him tell me that I may give him my blessing and rich gifts too.

FIRST KING: O king, we thank you for your trouble.
Let us go now.

SECOND KING: Yes, let us go! (*All bow, turn and go down aisle.*)

HEROD (*claps*): Soldiers, go and kill every child in Bethlehem. (*It was suggested that he qualify this.*)—and kill every child in Bethlehem under one year so that he cannot be king and reign over *my* kingdom.

SOLDIERS: I obey you, master! (*They start. It is suggested they salute. They salute and go.*)

HEROD (*walks off followed by PAGES. It is suggested he needs a line to walk off on. See "Writing a Bible Play." He repeats his last line.*) I won't have anybody reigning over my kingdom! (*Exit*).

(*PAGES remove throne.*)

SCENE III: *Shepherds on hillside.* (Slightly more spontaneous.)

(*SHEPHERDS advance slowly; they carry crooks; one carries a lamb.*)

ONE: Oh see the pretty star!

ANOTHER: Oh look at the light coming toward us!

A THIRD: Let us run away! (*He runs.*)

A FOURTH (*clutching him*): No, let us see what it is. (*They huddle together.*)

(*Enter ANGEL.*)

(*Discussion with children as to what the word "Angel" means.*)

ANGEL: Fear not, for I bring you good news. In Bethlehem there is a babe. You will find the babe in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to men! (*ANGEL passes out.*)

SECOND SHEPHERD: I wonder what that was.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Maybe it was only a vision.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Maybe it was a message from God.

FOURTH SHEPHERD: Let us go to Bethlehem and see. (*They walk slowly off.*)

SCENE IV: *Inn at Bethlehem*

(MARY and JOSEPH enter and knock. INNKEEPER enters, carrying lanthorn. The scene so far had been lighted by candles save HEROD's court, for which the electric lights had been turned on.)

JOSEPH: Can you give us a night's lodging? (*Salutation suggested.*)

JOSEPH: The Lord be with thee!

INNKEEPER: God bless thee! What do you want?

JOSEPH: Can you give us a night's lodging? (*Suggested he describe journey.*) For we have walked all day and are very tired, and have not been able to find any other place to sleep in Bethlehem.

INNKEEPER (*pausing a minute. At least JOSEPH suggested he pause, but he could not manage it.*) Well, we have no place in the hotel, but I can give you a stall in the stable.

JOSEPH (*whispers to MARY, then turns to INNKEEPER*): Well, I suppose we can take that. Where is the stable?

INNKEEPER: Over there! (*Points to center of room.*)

JOSEPH: May we have some hay?

INNKEEPER: Get it for yourself! (*He goes, leaving lanthorn.*)

JOSEPH (*draws manger full of hay into center of chapel, spreads some on the floor for MARY and throws over it his mantle. MARY sits.*) Is that enough?

MARY: Yes, I guess so.

JOSEPH: I am going to the inn to see if I can get you something warm. (*He blows out candles, and goes, taking lanthorn with him. This, it was thought, at five*

o'clock in the evening of December the twenty-fourth, should leave the scene in total darkness. The class was to sing "Silent Night" while Joseph smuggled the baby into the manger. But all properties must be rehearsed beforehand, or something sad will occur. (See "Coaching.") The church janitor had not been properly rehearsed, and he left the church lights on. The lights streamed into the chapel, revealing JOSEPH (property man) introducing the BABY into the manger, retiring silently to the inn, and then reentering with lighted lanthorn, JOSEPH in propria persona.

Of course an electric light might have represented the BABY, if the producer feels this possible. But even then such plays are like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. Rather let a baby cry through three fifths of a play than omit him. I have used babies in fifteen plays, and only twice has the crying ruined the play. Once, when the wise men chanted, "There lies the Blessed One sleeping so sweet between the ox and ass," the baby was sitting upright throwing his gifts about the chancel, but no one minds such little contretemps, and a live baby calls forth the sweetest love and lack of self-consciousness from the other children. (See picture of baby in "The Christmas Story," in Bible Plays.)

MARY (as JOSEPH enters, bending over BABY): Look!
Look!

JOSEPH: What a lovely baby! (*Puts down lanthorn on chancel rail behind manger.*)

MARY: Shall we call him "Jesus," for that means "Saviour"? (*Suggested.*)

JOSEPH: I'm sure the name will be fitting. Are you warm enough?

MARY: Yes, thank you.

JOSEPH (*embracing BABY*): Is the baby comfortable?

MARY: A little more straw, please.

JOSEPH (*gets it*): I am going to lie down, for I am tired.
(*Lies down behind manger. It was deduced that Joseph must lie down because the angel appeared to him in a dream.*)

SHEPHERDS (*from distance*): O see the lights in the stable!

SECOND SHEPHERD: Maybe it is the baby the angel told us of.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Let us go and see! (*They approach and kneel.*)

FIRST SHEPHERD: What is its name? (*Suggested, what is HIS name? The children throughout called the baby "it," perhaps because the part was taken by a female infant.*)

MARY: Its [his] name is "Jesus."

SHEPHERD: What is *your* name?

MARY: My name is "Mary."

SHEPHERD: We were upon the hillside one night and an angel appeared and told us there was a babe born in Bethlehem lying in a manger, and then the angels all said:

ALL THE SHEPHERDS (*raising hands on high*): Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men!

SHEPHERDESS (*kneeling*): I bring a lamb to the baby.
(*Presents it.*)

SHEPHERD: I bring my cap to the baby. (*Takes it off and gives it.*)

SHEPHERD: I bring my crook to the baby. (*Gives it.*)

SHEPHERD: I bring a ball to the baby. (*Gives it.*)

MARY: O shepherds, I thank you for your gifts to my baby.

(*Pause. It was suggested the shepherds make some preparation for the entrance of the kings, with the following results.*)

FIRST SHEPHERD: O look at the men on camels coming toward us!

SECOND SHEPHERD: They wear gold crowns on their heads.

THIRD SHEPHERD: They must be kings!

(*Enter KINGS. INNKEEPER also enters and stands in background.*)

KINGS: All hail, child! (*Suggested.*)

FIRST KING: What is its [his] name?

MARY: Its [his] name is "Jesus."

FIRST KING: What is your name?

MARY: My name is "Mary."

FIRST KING: Oh Mary, we have come a long way out of the east following a star, and it has stopped now above this stable. This must be the baby we seek. I bring gold to the baby. (*He presents casket.*)

SECOND KING: I bring frankincense.

THIRD KING: I bring myrrh. (*They present them.*)

MARY: Oh kings, I thank you for your gifts to my baby.

FIRST KING: Now we must hasten back to Herod, for he has promised to bring rich gifts to the baby.

JOSEPH (*waking and advancing with great dramatic*

effect): You are mistaken. Herod does not wish to give rich gifts to the baby; he wishes to slay it.

FIRST KING: You must be mistaken.

JOSEPH: No, for an angel appeared to me in a dream saying Herod wished to slay the child. You, O kings, go back and govern your own lands, and you, O shepherds, go back to your sheepfolds.

SHEPHERDS (*bowing to earth*): Farewell, King of the Jews! (*Suggested.*) (*They go.*)

KINGS (*bowing*): Farewell, Saviour of the world. (*Suggested.*) (*They go.*)

JOSEPH (*to INNKEEPER*): Here is the money we owe you—and thank you.

MARY: For all your trouble. (*They go.*)

INNKEEPER (*waving*): Farewell—baby! (*Suggested.*) (*He takes up lanthorn to depart.*)

(SOLDIERS *rush in. They speak together and jumble their words, but they get out their meaning.*)

SOLDIERS: King Herod has sent us to kill every babe in Bethlehem, because he won't have anybody born King of the Jews. Where is Jesus?

INNKEEPER: Ha, ha, ha! You won't find any King of the Jews born in *my* stable.

SOLDIERS: Well, we're going to hunt anyway. (*They prod the hay with their spears, the most realistic part of the play.*) Let's look in the Inn. (*They go and return.*) Well, we'll come again another day. (*They go off.*)

(The end of the play was a little difficult. The question was kept throughout in the children's minds: Was Jesus

born to be King of the Jews or Saviour of the world? If to be King of the Jews, how would he attain it? "By having gold!" one, I regret to say, observed. "By being son of a king," said another. "By slaying Herod and his soldiers," answered a third. They then decided he was not born to be King of the Jews, but Saviour of the world, a far finer thing. But was he Saviour of the world? What did it mean to be Saviour? "Why, it meant," they said, "to make all men good and true and kind and love one another and not kill their enemies." Well, had Jesus accomplished this? No! Then he wouldn't be Saviour of the world until this end had come about.

My own ending of the play was as follows:

INNKEEPER: King of the Jews?—or Saviour of the world?

King of the Jews—to reign like Herod? . . . No!
No!

Saviour of the world—to make all men love one another and be at peace? . . . More unlikely still!
It's all a dream I have dreamed this night. (*Moves off slowly swinging lanthorn.*) When I see the world at peace and loving one another . . . then I'll believe. (*Exit.*) The end.)

The eight-year-old INNKEEPER's language clothing this thought was as follows:

"I do not believe he'll be King of the Jews because he's a poor boy, born in a stable; but I believe he'll be Saviour

of the world because he'll make people love each other and be kind and good and love their enemies.

"If people don't follow him, but kill and fight each other, then he won't be Saviour of the world, but if they follow him and love one another, he'll be the Saviour of the world." (*Exit swinging lanthorn.*)

I have tried to render this as I wrote it down after the play, for no prompter's book was in existence. It is easily seen that this is not a brilliant work of creative genius. It has this value, that it makes the children think; they are more ready to suggest and to create at the end than at the beginning, but I truly believe that this variety of play should be sandwiched in between carefully written plays, that the child may reap the benefit of both methods.

Group work in developing a story into a play.—The story of The Prodigal Son as planned and presented by boys of eleven to fourteen years of age is a good illustration of what children, guided only by very general suggestions, may be led to do. After reading and rereading the story, common consent approved giving the play in three scenes: the home scene, the tent of the owner of the swine, and the home scene again.

Asked to define the character of the prodigal, the boys declared him to be an ordinary boy, eager to see the world and have adventure. Any boy would be like him. Asked what was the immediate cause of his leaving home, they decided that jealousy of his elder brother, and friction with him might be motive. The father was loving, and the elder brother, rather surprisingly, they

represented as mild and kind. The owner of the swine was characterized as a slave-driver.

Each wrote a scenario for each scene; these were then read and made into one. Then they began to act.

Boys' scenario for Scene I: Two SONS enter quarreling over division of sheep. (*Other difficulties?*) They quarrel and fight. Enter the FATHER who rebukes them. He listens, sends off elder and exhorts younger. YOUNGER begs division of property. FATHER calls STEWARD to bring possessions, and to summon ELDER SON. (At first it was proposed to divide the sheep. Suggested that sheep would be a bulky commodity to carry, it was decided to ask the father to sell them and divide gold.) Enter STEWARD with gold and scales, also robes, followed by ELDER SON. Division. Quarrel. YOUNGER SON leaves.

Scenario for Scene II: PRODIGAL begs at the door of a stern old gentleman. He asks for a job. He gets one feeding the swine. It is not long before he is so hungry that he tries to eat the swine's food. Soon the master appears and tells him to be more careful or he will lose his job. He decides his own father's servants are better fed than he and decides to return home and ask to be a servant.

(Questions asked: "Why is PRODIGAL hungry? Famine; also he has spent all of his money or been cheated out of it. It is suggested that he enter showing state of weakness. Had he anything left? Suggested he search pockets. Does he repent having left home? Would he like to go back? No! Why not? Because he is a proud boy; also his brother might tease him. How do people

speak when alone, in long or broken sentences? In short, broken ones! How would a master treat a servant he caught stealing? Whip him!)

Scenario for Scene III: No end but a happy one was possible, they decided.

FATHER crying pitifully for his younger son with his face in his arm, sometimes throwing his hands to the Lord. He sees PRODIGAL coming slowly in with his head downward. The FATHER rubs his hand across his eyes to make sure it was he. He gives hurried orders to the servants for a grand feast. The PRODIGAL SON is then on the stage, dropping down on his knees and repenting to his father, crying, "Father, I repent me," and clinging to his father's knees. In a field off stage the ELDER SON is talking to the SERVANT about his brother. The FATHER goes off stage and is heard talking to the ELDER. They return to stage and the brothers make up their quarrel so that when the servant announces the feast is ready they all leave the stage happy. Or, as another phrased it, the PRODIGAL goes out to meet his brother, shows him how he repents, and the two are reconciled.

(Suggestions. At the beginning of the scene the situation should be described. How long had the PRODIGAL been absent? Attitude of ELDER SON? It was decided they should enter conversing and then the ELDER SON should leave. Suggested the FATHER see dust in distance indicating the approach of some one. Suggested the FATHER send PRODIGAL within to robe him and meet and talk with ELDER SON on, rather than off stage. Suggested they do not add to words of Bible in end but show repentance of PRODIGAL by pantomime.

In acting out the play the children were held only to the scenario, not to the words, save in the direct quotations from the Bible. No prompting was necessary; no prompter's book was used. In the three rehearsals they never used the same wording for two minutes at a time. The words here given were jotted down merely as an illustration.

THE PRODIGAL SON

(Angry voices of ELDER and YOUNGER SONS heard without. They enter. Constantly they interrupt one another or talk together.)

YOUNGER: It's not fair at all! You have everything; I have nothing— *(He strides angrily forward.)*

ELDER: But—

YOUNGER: You have two thirds of the sheep; I have only one third—

ELDER: I'm the elder! That's the law—

YOUNGER: It's not fair! You have clothes and jewels—Look at them!

ELDER: I—

YOUNGER: Whom do the servants obey? You! You have the best colts; I have only the little ones. I believe you poisoned one of mine besides.

ELDER: You have no right to think such a thing.

YOUNGER: You have all the goodies from the table.

ELDER: I have not. I'm always perfectly willing to give you your share, brother.

YOUNGER: My share? *(Sneers.)* I won't stand it any longer! I'll—*(Hits ELDER, Scuffle.)*

(FATHER *hastens in.*)

FATHER: My sons, my sons! Stop this strife! I'm surprised at you.

YOUNGER (*turning appealingly*): Father—

ELDER (*hotly*): Father, he—

FATHER (*sternly*): Stop! (*He quells them by a look.*)
(*To ELDER.*) Now, I'll hear your story.

ELDER: Father—

YOUNGER: But, father—

FATHER (*to YOUNGER*): Now wait! I'll hear your story later. (*To ELDER.*) What is it?

ELDER: He says he doesn't get his share. He—

YOUNGER: I have to go out and sit in the barnyard and play with the pigs—I'm going to go away.

ELDER: Yes, and you'll be coming right back, trying to get some more—

FATHER (*to ELDER*): Go! I will send for you when I want you. (*ELDER goes.*) (*To YOUNGER.*) For shame to bring this reproach upon our house! What will the servants think?

YOUNGER: I won't stand it any longer! I'll go away.

FATHER: My son, my son, don't talk that way.

YOUNGER: I'm going away, I tell you. The house is too small for the two of us.

FATHER: No, no!

YOUNGER (*appealingly*): Give me my share, father!

FATHER: No!

YOUNGER: Please, O please!

FATHER (*wearily*): Well—what matter? (*Claps his hands and calls.*) Steward! Ho, steward!

(*Enter STEWARD.*)

FATHER: Bring my gold and silver and tell my elder son
I want him.

(Exit STEWARD.)

YOUNGER (*exultingly*): Ha! Now I will be rich and
make much money and will take you to live with me—
but not brother!

(Enter STEWARD with box of jewels, scales, and robes,
followed by ELDER BROTHER.)

FATHER: Take and divide the jewels.

(STEWARD holds scales and FATHER pours jewels into
them. The SONS make frequent attempts to dispute
the award.)

ELDER (*scathingly*): I suppose you're going to give
brother all of those!

(YOUNGER grabs.)

FATHER: There, there! I need no help. (*He gives
larger portion to ELDER. Also he divides robes.*)

YOUNGER (*making off*): Farewell! You will see no
more of me forever! (*Goes.*)

FATHER (*taking a step or two after*): My son! My son!
(*He sighs wearily and follows ELDER SON and STEW-
ARD within.*)

SCENE II. Outside the tent of the Owner of Swine

(Enter the PRODIGAL, clad in rags and staggering with
weakness and hunger. He staggers forward to center
of chapel—or stage—and falls to ground. He mut-
ters: "Home?" "Father?"—"No, no! My brother!
No!" (Shakes his head vehemently. Suddenly he
grows hopeful and searches pocket, brings forth glass
bead, and flings it disgustedly away. Then his eye

lights on door of tent. He rises, and flings himself against door, weakly battering it. The SWINE OWNER enters abruptly, pushing PRODIGAL roughly off.)

SWINE OWNER: Well? Well? What do you want here?
Be off!

PRODIGAL: If you please, sir—give me just a morsel to eat.

SWINE OWNER: Bah! Be off! I can't be bothered with—

PRODIGAL: Please, sir, I am hungry and famished.

There's been a famine in the country I came from—

SWINE OWNER: You look it. Be off, I say—

PRODIGAL: O please give me a job. I had money. My father gave me a great deal of money, but I've been cheated. A man cheated me and now I have nothing.

SWINE OWNER (*pushing roughly by*): I don't believe a word you say. Be off, I tell you, you thieving rogue!

PRODIGAL: I'm willing to work. Give me a job.

SWINE OWNER: Go tend the swine! That's all you're fit for.

PRODIGAL (*proudly, turning away*): The swine? Sir, my father was chief of a tribe.

SWINE OWNER: Ho, ho, ho! You look it. Why, you rascal, I don't believe you ever had a farthing in your pocket.

PRODIGAL: I tell you my father gave me a great deal of gold, but I spent it all.

SWINE OWNER: Well—(*He goes within, and returning, planks a platter of food on the ground.*)—I don't believe a word you say. There's the fodder for the

swine. Take the job or leave it. (*He goes but remains in distance, observing* PRODIGAL.)

PRODIGAL *walks haughtily away, turns, regards food, returns and sniffs, turns away, turns back, bends over food, raises himself proudly, sniffs, rubs stomach reflectively, plumps down by food and devours ravenously with both hands.*)

SWINE OWNER (*rushing forward*): You rascal! Hey, I've caught you, you thieving rogue!

(*PRODIGAL tries to throw food to swine, but cannot evade blows.*)

SWINE OWNER (*Beating him*): Oh, my swine! My swine! I told you to feed the swine.

PRODIGAL (*with feeble attempt at humor*): I *was* feeding the swine.

SWINE OWNER: Now be off with you, or I'll set the dogs on you. (*He picks up platter of food and goes, saying*): Be off! Hurry now!

PRODIGAL (*looking after him*): They refuse me even the husks that the swine would eat! How many hired servants of my father have bread and to spare—and I—I perish with hunger. I will arise and go unto my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants. (*Rises slowly and staggers out repeating*): I will arise—and go—unto—my father.

SCENE III. *Home again*

(*Enter* FATHER *and* ELDER SON *talking together.*)

FATHER: Ah, how I miss my younger son. Ten long

years has he been absent. Do you never long to see him?

ELDER: That rascal? No!

FATHER: Do you call him rascal? He who was so dear and so ready to yield—

ELDER: He who took your money and treated you disgracefully. If he returned and was truly sorry I could forgive him, but he's a rascal, that's what he is. He will never repent.

FATHER: My son, how can you say so—you who drove him from his home?

ELDER (*hotly*): I? I drove him from home? That's a lie! (*He turns away.*) I'm off to the fields. (*He goes angrily.*)

FATHER (*looks sadly after him, then, looking into distance his face brightens. He calls loudly*): Steward, ho, steward! (*STEWARD runs in.*) What is that which raises a cloud of dust in the distance?

STEWARD (*rushes forward and falls before PRODIGAL, who is returning. He runs back to his master*): Oh, sir, it is your dearly loved son!

FATHER: My son? (*He takes a few steps forward to meet PRODIGAL, who falls at his feet.*)

PRODIGAL: My father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.

FATHER (*tenderly raising him*): My son, rise! We will have a great feast. Ho, steward, prepare the fatted calf, and bring robes for my son, and go call his elder brother. (*STEWARD goes.*)

PRODIGAL: But, father, what will brother say?

FATHER: He will forgive you, never fear. If he knows you truly repent, he will forgive you.

PRODIGAL: Father, I am ashamed to meet him. I treated him disgracefully—

(Loud voices heard in distance.)

STEWARD: It is thy younger brother come home again.

ELDER: That rascal!

FATHER *(to PRODIGAL)*: Go within and put on the best robe and wash thee. [On second thought I think the "Wash thee!" was omitted.]

(PRODIGAL goes within as ELDER SON and STEWARD enter.)

ELDER SON: So the rascal is come again. He wants to get some more money out of you, I suppose.

FATHER: O my son, he truly repents. He asked me to make him one of my servants.

ELDER *(scornfully)*: He! *(He turns away, then turns again swiftly.)* O my father, these many years do I serve thee and never transgressed a commandment of thine, and thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends, but when this thy son is returned that hath devoured thy living, thou killedst for him the fatted calf.

FATHER: Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine, but it is meet to make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found. *(He lays a beseeching hand on shoulder of ELDER.)*

(The PRODIGAL SON enters, gayly dressed in the best robe. He starts on seeing his brother, and retreats a step, then advances swiftly. He kneels before him, lay-

ing his hand appealingly on him. The ELDER SON turns away. The PRODIGAL SON sinks back in deep dejection. The FATHER watches earnestly. The ELDER turns, regards PRODIGAL, bends and looks into his face, then suddenly raises him and embraces him. They go off, in close embrace, the FATHER with his face radiant.)

(If there be a curtain, it may fall on tableau.)

In this play there were two excellencies—the rapid flow of the conversation, which was much more natural than anything I have ever been able to achieve when the words have been memorized, and the pantomime, which seemed almost spontaneous and needed little rehearsing.

Rehearsing and rendering prepared plays.—The third method consists in reading the play and giving out the parts during one period of Sunday school, calling one, or at the most two rehearsals during the week, and presenting the play the following Sunday, costumed but without scenery, that is, in the church or chapel. For this type of play a prologue is of value. These plays present one crisis, not an elaborate plot. “The Judgment of Solomon,” “Moses in the Bulrushes,” and “The Good Samaritan” may all be coached in one rehearsal. (See *Shorter Bible Plays*.)

“Up, Up from Egypt to the Promised Land” is an attempt to use a limited group to swing the play with the entire class as chorus or participants. At one session of Sunday school the class is taught the music, to follow the leader (Moses) in marching, and two simple bits of action, at a given word to rise in their seats and shout “To

God the glory!" and at another word to rush into the aisle, crying: "The promised land!" The group of leaders, Pharaoh, Page, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, three Egyptian lords and soldiers, require one rehearsal during the week. The next Sunday the pageant is presented.

The chancel represents Egypt. Pharaoh enters followed by two soldiers bearing the body of his little son, and by three Egyptian lords. He summons Moses and Aaron, bidding them depart with the children of Israel. Moses turns and addresses the class: "Pharaoh commands, 'Cease ye the burden of Egypt.'" Class (springing to its feet): "To God the glory!" Moses further commands: "On now to Canaan, to the promised land!" Class (rushing into aisle): "The promised land!" They then march down main aisle to back singing, "Up, up from Egypt!" Pharaoh has left the chancel but the lords watch the departure of the children of Israel, saying, "Pharaoh will rue the day." Pharaoh does. He reappears, calling on his men to follow and bring them back. All plunge down main aisle after Israelites. Singing is heard, "Flowing with honey is the promised land!" as the Israelites, having made the circuit of the church reappear in chancel. The nave then becomes the Red Sea. Miriam cries: "Behold the Red Sea water! How shall we cross? And behold, behold the shining spears! We shall be brought to Egypt again as slaves." All join in reproaching Moses, who, stretching out his rod, says: "The Egyptians whom ye see to-day ye shall see them no more forever." Miriam breaks into song of rejoicing as the class plunges down through the Red Sea singing, "Through

Red Sea waters to the promised land!" The Egyptian army (soldiers and lords) plunge after and perish miserably, according to the description of the little page, while from the gallery at the back of the church the Israelites with clash of cymbals chorus a savage chant of joy over the death of their enemies.

"We will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously!

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?

The Lord shall reign forever and ever!"

In this play the imagination reigns supreme. There is no scenery, no costuming save of the leading group. It takes the story as written. If the child question its verity, explain its origin. (See chapter, "Value of Bible Plays.")

There are many occasions when the entire class or school may be used in this manner. For this many manager services have been written, to be acted in costume, with the class bearing gifts.

The same may be done for the harvest, when the children bring gifts of the fruits of the earth. "Ruth" may be acted in pantomime, to music; at the conclusion, in commemoration of the act of Boaz, in his thought for the poor and the needy, or in remembrance of the ancient law that man "should not glean the corners of the field, but should leave them for the poor and for the stranger, the class may enter in procession, laden with pumpkins, apples, grain. (As modern grains are done up in unsightly packages, let each child carry a stalk of corn for beauty.) "Ruth" may be given also as a play.

Also several parables may be used in a similar way. Take the parable of "The Sower." This may be made into a small pageant as prelude to the giving of autumn gifts. Let Scene I be the time of the sowing of the grain. The steward enters with the seed and divides it among the sowers, bidding them sow, that in the time of harvest the master may say, "Well done, ye good and faithful." The sowers sow, some by the wayside, some on the rocky hillside, some among thorns, and some upon good soil. The character of the sowers may correspond with the soil on which they sow the seed. And after those who sowed by the wayside have passed on, the birds (littlest children) spring forth and devour the precious grain. Then as the song of the sowers dies away in the distance the steward once more appears calling on the reapers to bring the fruits of harvest. Or, it may be, the song, "Oh, Where are the Reapers?" (*Gospel Hymns*) may be sung, as with lagging steps those who had sowed by the wayside, on the hillside, and among thorns make their entrance, and falter their excuses. Then, as the anger of the steward waxes high, the last sower appears, he who had sowed the seed upon good soil, and after him a long procession, their arms piled high with harvest, and singing a song of thanksgiving: "Oh be thankful unto the Lord, all ye lands!"

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER CAST IN DRAMATIC FORM

As an experiment in preparing the parable of "The Sower" a boy was sent in with a sack of imaginary grain to sow. After he had passed, little boys dressed as birds hopped in and devoured it. Again he sowed; this

time little girls as grain arose slowly from a stooping posture. A small boy as the sun rose upon them and they promptly withered away. A third time the sower sowed, and the girls as grain and the boys as tares arose together, but presently the little girls were crowded out. A fourth time the sower sowed, but this time the entire class arose and sang the song of harvest. Out of this experiment grew the "Pageant of the Sower." All of the above was finally discarded save the first scene, yet this simple acting prepared the class for the fuller presentation which was to follow.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

(A THANKSGIVING PROGRAM)

THE PEOPLE

A STEWARD.

FOUR SOWERS.

GATHERERS OF THE FRUITS OF HARVEST (the school).

THE PLACE

SCENE I. *Any countryside in the time of the sowing.*

SCENE II. *The same, in the time of the harvest.*

THE PROPERTIES

A sack of grain.

Four small sacks to receive grain. (Not absolutely necessary.)

An armful of wheat, or corn on the stalk.

The fruits of the earth.

(Enter the STEWARD bearing a large bag of seed-grain. He is tall and commanding, wearing white, and a tall white cap over a flowing headpiece.)

STEWARD *(on top step, calls loudly)*: Ho, Sowers-of-the-seed! Awake!

(Enter the four SOWERS. They are clad in white or cream; one or two have the black stripes on their garments. [See costuming.] One may be in sacking with broad black stripe in center. Each bears a suggestion of green in his costume; one has a jade-green mantle, one a green head-cloth, another a green sash.



POSSIBLE ILLUSTRATION FOR PARABLE OF THE SOWER—OR STAGING A FALL PLAY

Each may carry a small bag to receive the seed. They stand before STEWARD.)

STEWARD: Lo, the winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Break up the fallow ground and sow the seed, but sow not among thorns!

God giveth you the seed of all good things; he blesseth them with sun and rain and dew. Sow ye the seed and God will give the increase!

SOWERS (*in unison, raising hands aloft*): Blessed be his name!

Lo, as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. (*They end with enthusiasm.*)

STEWARD (*dividing the seed among them*): Work ye therefore, that in the time of harvest the master may say, "Well done, ye good and faithful!" (*He goes.*)

FIRST SOWER (*craning his neck to see that the STEWARD is surely gone*): Hola! I work for my penny-a-day! (*Shrugs.*)

I shall sow my seed here by the roadside that I may take part in the merrymaking of them that pass; and in the time of harvest the grain will be easy garnered.

THIRD SOWER (*meaningly*): Perchance others besides thee will find it easy—and help themselves.

SECOND SOWER (*with zeal*): As for me, I shall not stint my labor for the master! I shall sow my seed on the hill yonder, where the sun shines hot against the rocky soil. So will the seed spring quickly, the grain will ripen, and I be counted not—ah—least among the servants of the master!

(OTHER SOWERS *make an angry motion as if to speak.*)

SECOND SOWER (*quickly*): Maybe the master will call on me to sit at his right hand at the feast of harvest.

FIRST SOWER (*rudely*): Maybe he *will* and maybe he *won't!*

FOURTH SOWER: Measure not thy grain till it ripen.

THIRD SOWER: Bah! There is no depth of soil on yonder rocky hillside. *I* shall choose the meadow by the river where all grows rankly. Then 'twill need little care, and I be free to spend my time as pleaseth.

FOURTH SOWER (*warningly*): Thorns grew there yesteryear; their seeds lie fallow, but beware, lest they choke thy harvest.

THIRD SOWER: At least 'tis better than the trodden highway—ay, or the rocky hillside. (*Sneeringly*, to FOURTH SOWER.) Where wilt *thou* sow then?

FOURTH SOWER (*pointing*): In the fields to westward!

FIRST SOWER: But 'tis far distant!

SECOND SOWER: But there are great stones there!

THIRD SOWER: But there is no water!

(*All speak together.*)

FOURTH SOWER (*claps hands to ears and smiles*): Have mercy!

FIRST SOWER: Why dost thou choose *it*? It is so far distant.

SECOND SOWER: There are great stones there.

THIRD SOWER: And there is no water.

FOURTH SOWER (*simply*): The soil is good. For the

stones, I will remove them, and fetch the water from the nearest river.

THIRD SOWER (*turning jeeringly away*): God help thee for a fool!

FIRST SOWER: I could understand thy choosing the best soil, were it for *thyself* thou wert working—but it is for the *master*!

FOURTH SOWER: Ay—for the master of the harvest!

SECOND SOWER (*enthusiastically*): You say well!

Come, and let us strive one with another, to which of his servants, when we bring our gleanings, the master will say, "Come up higher! Enter into the joy of thy Lord!"

(*All sow, singing and throwing the seed with great sweeps of the hand in time to the music. THE FIRST SOWER sows in middle of chancel, the SECOND high up at back, the THIRD across the front at foot of steps, the FOURTH moves slowly off down main aisle to westward.*)

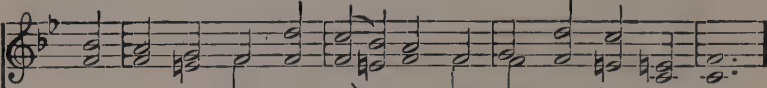
(*The song may be any song of sowing, either "We plow the fields and scatter"—Wir Pflügen, German, or "Bringing in the Sheaves."*)

"WE PLOW THE FIELDS AND SCATTER"

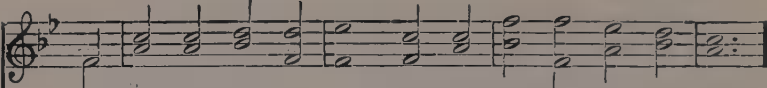
MATTHIAS CLAUDIUS, 1782

JOHANN A. P. SCHULZ, 1800

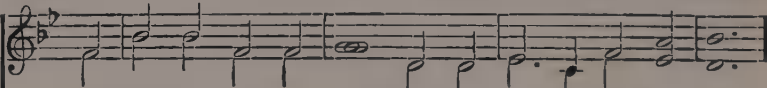
The musical score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass clef, in 4/2 time. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: 1. We plow the fields, and scat - ter The good seed on the land, 2. We thank Thee, then, O Fa - ther, For all things bright and good,



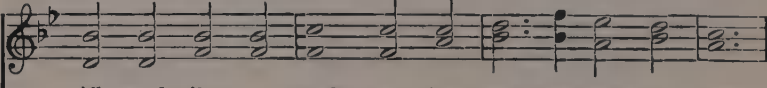
But it is fed and wa - tered By God's al - migh - ty hand;
The seed - time and the har - vest, Our life, our health, our food:



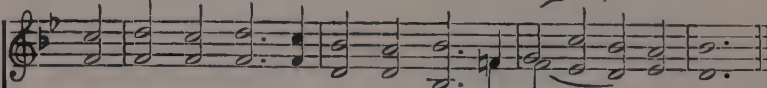
He sends the snow in win - ter, The warmth to swell the grain,
No gifts have we to of - fer For all Thy love im - parts,



The breez - es and the sun - shine, And soft, re - fresh - ing rain.
But that which Thou de - sir - est, Our hum - ble, grate - ful hearts.



All good gifts a - round us Are sent from heaven a - bove;



Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord for all..... His love.

(*As the SOWERS pass out of sight, the little children dressed as crows or blackbirds hop into chancel and pick up the seeds. Their costumes may be little black capes cut to resemble feathers, and attached to hoods, ending in front in a pointed bill, stiffened by buckram, with yellow eyes painted or attached. They run on, then hop, then run. As they do so, let bird music be played from the side by means of the artificial water-birds [obtainable at toy-stores for twenty-five cents.] As the bird music ceases, the birds hop out. Then, if desired, the choir or congregation may sing: "Oh, Where are the Reapers?" by George F. Root. [Gospel Hymns.] Or let soft music be played throughout all pauses.*)

SCENE II. *The Harvest*

(*Enter the STEWARD. He wears a yellow mantle. Let all the REAPERS [the SOWERS of Scene I] change their green garb to yellow, orange, or tan.*)

STEWARD (*calls*): Ho, reapers and gatherers of the fruits of harvest! Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe and the summer is ended!

(*Enter FIRST REAPER; he carries nothing.*)

FIRST REAPER: Alack, master steward!

STEWARD: Where are the fruits of thy harvest?

FIRST REAPER: Alack! I cast my seed by the wayside and, lo, the fowls came and devoured them up.

STEWARD: And wherefore cast ye your seed on the trodden highway?

FIRST REAPER: Not mine the blame! (*Impressively.*)
The *Evil One*, he sent the birds to devour—

STEWARD: While *thou* wert sleeping! (REAPER *hangs his head.*) Make thy excuse to the master of the harvest. (REAPER *turns his back and stands in attitude of deep dejection.* The STEWARD *turns and calls*):
Ho, reapers, thrust ye in the sickle and reap!

(*Enter SECOND REAPER.*)

SECOND REAPER (*impetuously*): Oh sir, I have sinned, I have sinned! I cast my seed on yonder rocky ground in the sweet sunshine, and when I saw the blades spring up, I rejoiced with exceeding great joy—

STEWARD: Where, then, are thy fruits of harvest?

SECOND REAPER: Sir, I greatly feared the robbers, so in the night time I stole away, meaning to return in the morning; but when the sun rose up, it scorched the tender seedlings, and because they had no root, they withered away.

STEWARD (*searchingly*): Was it *one* morning's sun which scorched the seedlings?

SECOND REAPER: No, master, I forgot them many days.
(*He hangs his head.*)

STEWARD: Make thy excuse to the master of the harvest. (*Turns and calls.*) Ho, reapers, the time is come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe!

(SECOND REAPER *sits despairing, head in hands, as the THIRD REAPER enters.*)

THIRD REAPER (*sullenly*): Sir, I sowed the seed, sowing it upon good ground, but the thorns sprung up and choked them.

STEWARD: And wherefore did ye not take the sickle and cut down the thorns and burn them?

THIRD REAPER: I wist not of them,

STEWARD: Ye sowed the seed—but ye left the harvest to God—eh?

THIRD REAPER: I sowed the seed—but I was busied with merrymakings and feastings; also the cares of mine household fretted me, so that I visited not the fields till I heard thy call to harvest.

STEWARD: And then the brambles had choked the blessed grain! (*He raises his hand in great wrath.*) O unprofitable servants! There is none that doeth good, no, not one!

(THIRD REAPER *turns away despairingly. All hang heads, save the FIRST, who advances.*)

FIRST REAPER: Master, another sower went forth to sow.

STEWARD: Where is he? (*Calls.*) Ho, reaper, come, for the fields are white to harvest!

FIRST REAPER: I have seen him afar, carrying water from the river.

THIRD REAPER: I have seen him weeding, laboring while I feasted.

SECOND REAPER (*pointing*): And I see him now, coming out of the sunset, bringing his harvest with him.

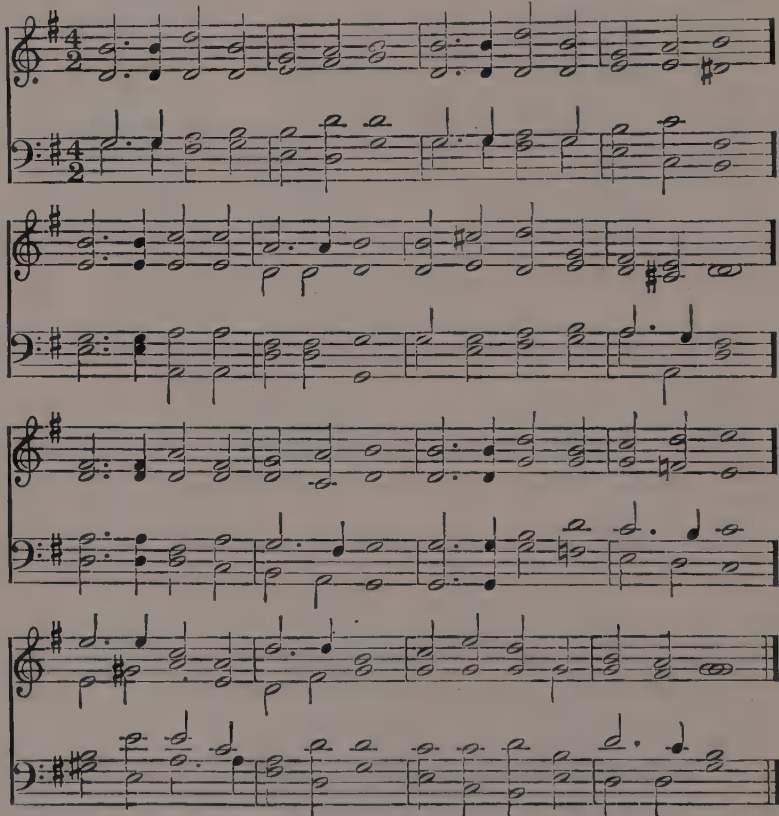
(*The procession, headed by the FOURTH REAPER, advances down the main aisle. The FOURTH REAPER carries a big bunch of grain. The class or school bring all manner of the fruits of harvest. Each may carry a cornstalk and wear a yellow headdress or not as desired. As they advance they sing.*)

Song: "Come, ye thankful people, come" (by George J. Elvey).

"COME, YE THANKFUL PEOPLE, COME"

St. George's, Windsor

GEORGE J. ELVEY, 1858



"Come, ye thankful people, come,
Raise the song of harvest home:
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin;

God our Maker doth provide
 For our wants to be supplied;
 Come to God's own temple, come,
 Raise the song of harvest home."
 (St. George's, Windsor.)

(*Sing as many verses as necessary.*)

(*As they reach the chancel the STEWARD, stretching out his arms, speaks.*)

STEWARD: O blessed laborer of the master's harvest, thou *only* hast done well!

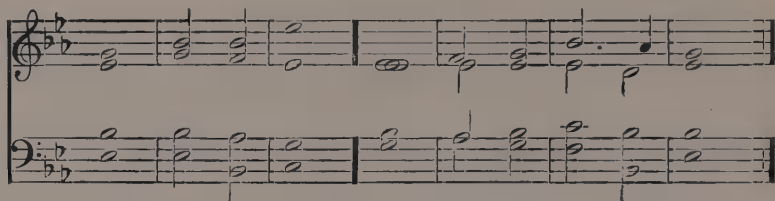
FOURTH REAPER (*mounting steps to join him*): Sir, praise not me. Praise the good soil wherein I cast my seed, which brought forth the fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some an hundredfold.

STEWARD (*turning to others*): O servants of the master, ye without understanding, ye who with joy received the seed yet had no root in yourself, and so endured but for a time, ye who received the seed and let the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke it—ye thought that the harvest was only for the *master*! Know that all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, abound to the glory of God! Come all of ye and offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows to the Most High.

(*All follow the STEWARD to the altar and facing the altar, sing with hands raised in attitude of prayer the "Jubilate." Or, if there is no altar, let the children sing as they stand, facing the congregation.*)

JUBILATE DEO

HOPKINS



(Psalm C)

O be joyful in the Lord | all ye lands:
 serve the Lord with gladness,
 and come before his | presence with a song.

Be ye sure that the Lord he is God;
 it is he that hath made us and not | we ourselves:
 We are his people and the | sheep of his pasture.

O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving,
 and into his | courts with praise:
 be thankful unto him and speak | GOOD of his
 name.

For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is ever | LASTing:
 and his truth endureth from generation to | genera-
 tion.

*(At the conclusion, the class advance with their gifts,
 which the REAPERS place about chancel, and all
 retire singing, "Come, ye thankful people, come.")*

III. COACHING THE PLAY

I SUGGEST to beginners, with great diffidence, the following directions for coaching Bible plays:

In coaching the longer plays it is well to secure both the eager desire of the child and also the cooperation of the parents. Eight out of ten children desire to act; seek these out and establish the group. Announce the giving of a play in Sunday school and ask the names of those desiring to take part; put up a poster appointing the day for the reading of the play, or write circular letters to those who you think might be interested.

Play groups and players.—If you assemble a regular play group for continuous work, let the children elect a president and secretary, and pass over as much responsibility to them as possible. Appoint or elect some one to see that the costumes are put away after using, also the properties.

After the play group is established try to build up a sense of fair play in the children. Make each feel that his part is important, a necessary part of the whole, and that it is due to the others that he should finish what he undertakes. Occasionally a child, disappointed in his lines, will desire to throw the whole thing over. For the child's own sake he should be held to his post—if possible. This will depend largely on his home background. I once wrote to a small boy urging his return on the score of fairness to others, because a play is team work. The



HEBREWS

EGYPTIANS

BABYLONIAN SOLDIER

child's parents cordially cooperated; the boy returned in the pleasantest spirit and remained for some time after a member of the group. A small girl in one of the Settlement groups left because to a newcomer was given the part of fairy queen, and her parents enthusiastically supported *her*.

Selecting the play.—At the first meeting of the group, read the play, or plays, if there be a choice, to the children. As the reading progresses, the poorer portions will stand out glaringly, and may need revision. If children have great difficulty in learning a certain portion, this generally indicates the need of change. Note what holds their interest with reference to future plays. Then let the children try out for the parts, reading a phrase or more in turn, and vote for the leading characters at least. This is of absorbing interest to them, and in general they vote very wisely. After the voting let the children read the play themselves, and correct them only when absolutely necessary.

A little conversation on the fine art of pauses may be inserted here if the coach is of a hopeful disposition. Children have an uneasy sense, during a pause, that some one has forgotten his part, or that *you* will think so, and they seek to reassure the prompter by adding phrase to phrase as quickly as possible. Undeceive them. Occasionally a child will make a beautiful pause, a pause so remarkable and so full (you think) of feeling, that your heart will rejoice. Then as the pause grows longer—and longer—you realize that it was no birth (of understanding) but a forgetting. But, nevertheless, praise; the understanding may arise. And if a child for-

gets, train him to act so in character that all may think it a pause.

Rehearsals. —Once started, proceed swiftly. About eight rehearsals suffice for a forty-minute play, but this does not mean that all the children attend all eight rehearsals. Most play groups divide into suns and satellites. At first those children who swing the play may be coached in one group, the lesser actors in another. Soldiers who carry a spear and drag Haman to his doom, pages who announce the entrance of the king or hold a royal fan over the queen, need not stand through long rehearsals. If it is not practicable to have separate rehearsals, provide a story-teller or a ball to hold the attention of those not needed. And bring the groups together when they are well advanced. A long stand-about part tends toward lack of interest. Every child likes the *long*, but not the *stand-about*. If a child has been "David" in "David and Goliath," and finds himself cast for the humble character of a slave in "Belshazzar's Feast," he is not always able to understand just why. You may explain that no child can be first always, but still he is sad. Therefore I have found it well to let a minor character undertake two parts when practicable. A child must be kept busy. Thus in "David and Goliath" a son of Jesse clothed in sheepskins in Act I, may continue in the play by becoming a fierce red-clad Philistine in Act II.

Sometimes it is possible to let one member of the group coach the others under your direction, this when the parts are well advanced; or one member may coach the one group while you are busied with the other.

The first rehearsal is apt to be encouraging, the second, third, and fourth, plodding, the fifth utterly discouraging. If the sixth swings the play, be merry.

Character work.—As soon as the children know their own parts, entrances, cues, and “business,” try to work up their sympathy with the rest of the play, their reaction to the one who happens to be speaking. This is not always easy. It takes quite a course of training to disabuse a child of the idea that his part in a play is to speak a piece, and that when he has finished his lines his part is over. Yet it is this very training which makes play work so valuable. Speaking a piece, solo work of any kind, often tends to make a child self-conscious: group-work—never! On the contrary, it tends to make a child forget himself, think of himself as one of many. And it is only by good team work that a charming effect may be secured. Every child must keep in character, must reflect the emotion of the moment.

In coaching, it is well to be sure that each child understands at the start certain little artificialities, and their reason, why, for instance, his face should turn partially toward the audience, why his near foot should modestly retreat behind the other, thus swinging his body forward, why gesturing should be largely accomplished with the off-hand, all in order that his body and voice may carry his message across to the audience, rather than lose itself in the back-drop. Let each child in turn come out in front and observe the effect of talking back rather than forward, of turning with face to the back rather than to the front. Try to make them feel that the one who is speaking should, in general, be seen, per-

haps advance a step from the group, while those whom he is addressing should, in general, make way. Of course this is all *generally speaking*. All rules may be broken by those able to surmount the difficulties involved.

Prayer is so constant an element in the old Bible plays that it must be remembered that the Hebrew attitude of prayer, for men, was arms upraised to heaven, palms outward, as though reaching out after God. The woman's attitude, more expressive of humility and resignation, was that of arms folded across the breast.

Group cooperation.—A mob without individual lines is always difficult to keep together; therefore compose them when possible out of the minor characters. In "Esther" the princes of Babylon may always become humble Israelites in the latter portion of the play. Sometimes it is possible to write in a line for the individuals composing a mob; when this is not possible, at least make each member, rather than the mob as a whole, responsible for bits of the group shouting. Everyone's part is no one's part. When all are supposed to shout: "The king! Huzza!" no one will remember or lead; each will wait on the other. Therefore put all the general remarks under some child's name and train the others to join in when he starts. Thus, instead of writing: "All [cry]: 'The king! Huzza!'" write: "Tom—or Dick—or Harry (and all) [cry], 'The king! Huzza!'"

Sometimes in mob scenes, in order to give a natural tone to the shouts or cries, it is advisable to dissect them. Take the cry, "Way for the son of David!" Let three of the group shout, "Way! Way!" and three others, "Huzza for the son of David!" and others, "Da-

vid's son! David's son! Make way!" Then let all join in the cry, "Way for the son of David!" Confusion makes for realism. People *will* all talk together. Therefore let groups do this occasionally, and then repeat individually the speeches. (See conversation of the satraps in "Daniel.")

Use of pantomime.—If children are unwilling to make use of their bodies, it may help to have them render a certain situation in pantomime, trying to express the thought in facial and bodily action. Go over the scene several times in this way before again resorting to speech. It may be found possible to omit the words altogether and improve the play. Pantomime is often better than the spoken word. How many people prefer the moving picture to the reading of a play! In the old play "Lend Me Five Shillings" Mr. Jefferson said that at first, when he found in the pocket of the overcoat the five shillings of which he felt such desperate need, he acquainted the audience with the fact, verbally. Later he found that his audience vastly preferred to *discover his discovery* through the illumination of his features.

Some children find it very easy to express themselves; naturally they accent the right word, the right syllable. It may be they grow to feel that this is all that is necessary; they rely upon the voice to accomplish everything. A certain insincerity is soon evident. Far better underemphasis than the overemphasis without feeling which degenerates into ranting. Therefore do tread upon this tendency. Advise: Stop thinking of what you are saying, or how you are saying it: *Feel* what you are saying, and let the expression take care of itself for a time.

Stage groupings.—If possible, teach the children a little “composition,” a little feeling for grouping. Unless the play is fantastically formal, two figures on one side against one on the other make a prettier picture than three at even distances apart. Naturally, youngsters desire to stand in a straight and narrow line, the front child, who always manages to be the biggest, concealing all the others. Break up this virtuous desire into the gracious line of the curve.

Plans and “properties.”—It is a good plan to go over the manuscript of the play between rehearsals, in solitude. Determine the entrances and exits early. Work out the stage business, the grouping—on paper if need be. Get in all the action possible. In “Esther” the slaves have only four lines, but they are the most industrious in the play, as they serve the food and drink, pile up the cushions on the couches, and carry the litter for Mordecai. In “The Burning Fiery Furnace,” the naughty little Jewish boys made a delightful business of tripping up the haughty Babylonian soldier. (They greatly improved upon the coach’s directions, for obvious reasons.) In “David” one son of Jesse was supposed to show his unfitness to be chosen king, by his gluttony in devouring the food brought for the prophet Samuel. He made so much “business” out of this, so much *too* much, devouring his loaf in huge mouthfuls and crunching it with a look of blissful enjoyment, with distended cheek, that he almost ruined the play. It seldom happens that a child makes too much of his part; this was due to the failure to rehearse the “property,” the loaf of bread, beforehand.

For properties *must* be introduced early in the play. (Substitutes, if the properties themselves be fragile.) Never by any chance leave them till the day of the play, or spears will be carried in the left and shields in the right hand. Moses' ark will be placed with its back to the audience. Every conceivable mischance will take place. Recently, when using swords and goblets in the play of "Esther" at the dress rehearsal, it was found that the children had not the faintest idea what to do with them. They still clutched the swords, used in entrance, in the right hand, while drinking awkwardly from their goblets held in the left. A word, and swords were slipped into sashes, goblets were passed to the right hand and drinking resumed.

Dress rehearsals.—At the dress rehearsal notice carefully every detail. Do the costumes harmonize? What must be altered? What changed entirely? Light, scenery, costume, all affect each other, and the children are affected by them. A dress rehearsal stimulates the imagination. Have the dress rehearsal therefore several days before the play. Have two if possible.

Try throughout to impress upon the children that the thing of greatest importance is so to render the thought of the play as to get it across to the audience, that to do this everything tends and is subordinate, that to do this each must cease to think of himself as Jane or Peter, and *be* the character he represents.

With hesitating deprecation do I advance my final method of coaching. To some it may seem neither original nor wise. Yet prizes in some shape or other are part of daily life. At the conclusion of each re-

hearsal the children are called together. Each is criticized with praise or blame according to the quality of his acting and his conduct. It might be thought that the children would not rally for such criticism, but they do, for each is then presented with two pieces of molasses candy.

Rarely has it been necessary to refuse a candy to a child on the score of conduct, but when such has been the case he has always acquiesced with a cheerful grin. I say "*he*," for almost never has a girl forfeited a sweetmeat.

IV. USE OF MUSIC

IN every play, in every way, introduce music. Music and singing will give charm to the dullest play.

I have grown to feel that it is not well to take music which has a modern application and to attempt to use it with ancient wording. For instance, to take "My Country, 'tis of Thee" and introduce the words of a psalm, is distinctly offensive. The mind will be singing "My country" even though the lips be singing "My God" or "Jehovah." It is better to select music not too well known, or to which no words have been written.

Suiting the music to the play.—Some modern hymns are so worded that they may be used as they stand—"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah!" "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"; "Now the Day is Over"; other hymns may be used if the wording is altered. The old chants are always good, and much of the most beautiful of modern music is appropriate, such as the oratorio of "Elijah" by Mendelssohn, and Handel's "Messiah."

But, in general, these will be found too difficult for children. They may be played, and add greatly to the charm, but when it comes to the singing, something simpler will be necessary, something which the children will easily learn.

Using the church choir.—If you can secure the services of a choir, a great deal may be attempted which otherwise one would not venture. The most beautiful render-



EGYPTIAN PRINCESS SLAVE BABYLONIAN KING

ing of "The Golden Calf" under the writer's direction was that given in the chancel assisted by a full boy choir. Then, and then only, can the full glory of a Bible play be realized. But if the choirmaster will assist in training the play group, much may be accomplished, and even with untrained voices a little music adds greatly.

Music which has been found useful.—The music listed below is that which seems both possible and appropriate to use, either as it stands or with changed wording.

"Integer Vitae." Lib. I, Ode XXII. Horatii Flacci.

"Gaudeamus Igitur."

"Old Hundred."

"Lift Up Your Heads, O Ye Gates": Junior Choir Series, by Mary Louisa Butler.

"The Lord Is My Shepherd": Junior Choir Series, by Mary Louisa Butler, Chicago.

"The Lord Is My Shepherd," by Samuel Liddle.

"I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me."

From Gospel Hymns:

"Joy to the World," arranged from Handel.

"Jewels," by George F. Root.

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," by Luther.

"O God, Our Help," by H. W. Greatorex.

"Now the Day Is Over," by Joseph Barnby.

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," by William L. Viner.

"Bringing in the Sheaves," by George A. Minor.

"Beulah Land," by John R. Sweney.

Other hymns:

"Day is Dying in the West," by Sherwin.

"Memories of Galilee," by Palmer.

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel": Ancient Plain Song.

"By Cool Siloam's Shady Rill," by Jeremiah Clark.
The New Hymnal.

"Now Thank We All Our God," Johann Crüger, harmonized by Felix Mendelssohn.

"Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," George Elvey.

"Lord, Dismiss Us," Sicilian Folksong.

"The King of Love My Shepherd Is," by John B. Dykes.

Crusader's Hymn, from the twelfth century, "Fairest Lord Jesus."

Almost all Christmas carols; Hallelujah Chorus from "Messiah."

"Silent Night."

"Adeste Fideles," J. F. Wade's Cantus Diversi, etc.

"Santa Lucia."

"Nachklänge," from "Tannhäuser."

Soldiers' Chorus from "Faust."

Chorus of Priests of Baal, Mendelssohn's "Elijah."

"Esther," a cantata by Bradbury.

"Ancient of Days" (Italian air).

Polish national anthem.

"Largo," Handel.

And many, many more.

I have chosen the above music as being such as might be used as it stands or with slight change in the wording, and a few, like "Jewels," and "Memories of Galilee," because children seem to love them. Of course if used within a Bible play the words must be altered.

V. RHYTHMIC MOVEMENT IN THE BIBLE PLAY

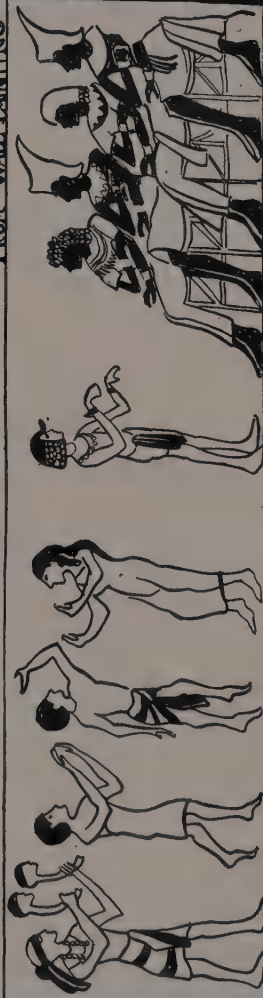
Expression through rhythm.—The religious emotion has always found expression in bodily motion, generally rhythmic. Our ancestors worshiped through the dance. In every religion, I think without exception, rhythmic movement has accompanied worship. Even the early Christian priests went through certain rhythmic movements to the accompaniment of music.

These swaying movements have great charm, and, because they are such a feature of the past—being used at funerals as at marriage feasts, for purposes of prayer and worship as well as reveling, to celebrate the return of a warrior and triumph over an enemy—they should be introduced wherever possible in a Bible play. Even David did not disdain to leap and dance before the Lord, though Saul's daughter played critic.

The primitive dances of all peoples are expressive of desires or emotions. Therefore in coaching, think of what emotion you desire to express and let the body conform. Keep in mind certain fundamental ideas, namely: "To manage the hands skillfully and with grace was of paramount importance, not only to the Egyptians, but with other ancient peoples" (Wilkinson). "Dancing in biblical times was not a graceful gliding, but a violent motion of the feet, suggestive of leaping like lambs. It was sometimes in the nature of a circular motion, turn-



FROM WALL PAINTING



OLD EGYPTIAN DANCE FIGURES: THE SPHINX: DESIGNS:

EGYPTIAN CHART

ing constantly on the heel in rotary style on one spot like the dance of dervishes. The choric dances were also sinuous, consisting of swaying, writhing movements of the body."

The choric or group work seems best for children, as the attention is not then concentrated on any one individual. Also the chorus serves to introduce all children for whom no speaking part remains; it serves as reservoir from which one may draw to fill vacancies.

Accompanying properties.—The use of cymbals is always good. "It has been established . . . that in the mention of timbrels, cymbals; and other musical instruments the dance is generally included" (The Badminton Library, "Dancing," by Mrs. Moore). The real cymbals cost two and a half dollars each. If each member of the chorus is to possess one, the leader may be provided with a genuine pair to give the clash, and the others with small pan-covers gilded, with the caution that they are not under any circumstances to strike them together. These pan-covers may also be used for hair ornament, being bound to the head, one on each side, with ribbon or elastic.

Scarves are ever charming; also the tall, slender palm branches. These cost about thirty-five cents apiece and are almost indestructible, if kept well oiled. So-called "Cutie palms," from Hawaii, costing five cents, will also serve. These may be had of wholesale florists.

Different types of movements.—Funerals in old Egypt were always accompanied by swaying groups, performing in honor of the dead. Mrs. Moore describes them as follows: "On the feast of eternity . . . the procession

in which the image of the deceased was carried was generally led by dancers. Their movements in olden time were slow, measured, and gliding, the arms raised above the head, the palms turned outward. Certain women with grease-besmeared heads covered with ashes, leaving only their eyes and mouth conspicuous, performed a contorted and convulsive dance. It consisted of strained twistings and slow well-balanced steps, the dancers keeping their eyes half-closed."

In Egypt they also sought to represent the motion of the stars about the sun, moving rhythmically about the altar, which represented the sun. They held their hands in position to represent the signs of the zodiac, and paused at certain intervals to show the immovability of the earth. Ball-playing was also used and may be introduced with charm by Asenath the priest's daughter, in "Joseph," or by the daughter of Pharaoh when she and her maidens descend to bathe in the river.

All of these movements may be performed to the music of tambourines, drums, or the clapping of hands, in the absence of better musical instruments such as harp or flute.

Positions characteristic of Egypt.—There are many charming poses characteristic of Egypt.

One position: Both arms before the body, with elbows bent, and palms horizontal, turned up or down.

Another position: One hand in first position, the other stretched down and back, with palm horizontal, turned up or down.

Another position: One hand in first position, the other raised over the head and bent, with palm horizontal.

Knees should be flexed and raised high, with toes pointed.

Again to quote Mrs. Moore: "The Hebrews, the Greeks, the Aztecs, and the French are the nations who have had the most beautiful dances. The deeper I go into it, the more I am convinced that the religious dance has been the foundation of all others. The Jewish dances were generally expressive of joy, praise, or thanksgiving, and were largely of a circular order, or a double choir, that is, of two rows of girls dancing." Men and women never mixed except in an orgy like that about the golden calf.

Ancient occasions calling for this form of expression.—Three festivals were always accompanied by dancing, the Feast of May, the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

One of the oldest was in honor of the fruitfulness of the harvest. In this the gleaners circled the stacks of grain, bowing repeatedly to the earth. (See "Ruth and Boaz," *Bible Plays*.)

I have searched in vain for more definite descriptions of these movements. Probably each person improvised, or one started, and the others followed. In general, music with a well-marked rhythm and a few simple movements will suffice. In playing "Esther" the first ten bars of "The Invocation to the Sun-god," by Carlos Troyer, were used. The maidens entered singly, with fingers touching over the head, and revolved slowly for eight counts; then, raising the arms high over the head, they swayed slowly to one side (four counts), then to the other side (four counts). This was then re-

peated and ended in a low salaam. In the riddle of the sun, moon, and earth, which they repeat at the banquet scene, the sun, chanting, slowly revolved where she stood, the moon likewise, after which the earth slowly revolved, coming in between them to represent eclipse, these indicating respectively the king, Haman and Esther.

Movements.—There are many simple movements. Sinking to one knee, the body and arms may be swayed rhythmically about, or the arms may be raised to heaven and then sink to earth with body prone. If the characteristic poses are shown to the child, he may be trained to express the idea or emotion as he pleases. This individual expression of feeling in group work is especially charming where the dance is unpremeditated as in Jephthah's daughter when she goes out to greet him on his home coming. Also at the conclusion of the play, as the maidens wind down the mountain, show to the children the use of the hands and body which seems to indicate the offering up, or making holy, the sacrifice of self; choose fitting music, and let the children, moving to its rhythm, seek to express themselves.

In trying out this method, however, keep the children simple; do not let them strain after effect. Avoid an audience at rehearsals, lest they work for the audience rather than the idea.

In giving these Bible plays a few movements have been worked out, as the following:

Directions.—(Arranged to the first sixteen measures of the "Nachklänge" from "Tannhäuser.")

Have the arms in any position described, as "Position characteristic of Egypt."

Let the children enter on the second measure, a step to a measure, thus:

First count: Bend the knee, raising the foot under the body, toe pointed down.

Second count: Thrust the foot forward, toe pointed.

Third count: Place foot on floor a step in advance of other foot.

Repeat up to tenth measure, all forming in a circle.

Beginning with the tenth measure move as follows:

First count: Raise arms high.

Second count: Raise right foot.

Third count: Thrust right foot to right, and throw full weight upon it as you clap hands or cymbals together.

Hold this position three counts.

Repeat on left side.

Repeat this entire movement as often as desired.

Celebration of the Golden Calf (described in "The Golden Calf," *Bible Plays*).—This may also be used in the case of any idol worship.

The players enter in procession. The leader carries cymbals; the others carry palms or green branches in the right hand, which is extended stiffly before them. The left hand is extended behind them with palm horizontal. With each step the knee is lifted high and the toe pointed down.

Music: Cry of the Prophets of Baal, Mendelssohn's "Elijah."

Steps:

Right foot, left foot, right foot, weight thrown back on left foot.

Right foot, left foot, right foot, weight thrown back on left foot.

Right foot, left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot, weight thrown back on left foot.

(This movement is repeated until all form a circle.)

(All then advance to center. Four counts.)

Right foot, left foot, right foot, weight thrown back on left foot.

(All then retreat from center. Four counts.)

Right foot, left foot, right foot, weight thrown back on left foot.

(Raise arms slowly on eight counts.)

(Repeat. During this repetition the leader advances to front (four counts). She clashes cymbals overhead on eighth count. Then she marches to one side, one, two, three, turn on four; she marches back again, one, two, three, turn on four, with a clash of cymbals.)

Movements described in "The Burning Fiery Furnace,"
Bible Plays.

Music: Cry of the Prophets of Baal, Mendelssohn's "Elijah."

(Lift knees high and point toes down.)

First Position: Hold the arms in front, with elbows bent, hands stiffly forward.

Second Position: Let fingers meet overhead.

20 counts: March in a circle (first position).

4 counts: Revolve (second position).

4 counts: March in a circle (first position).

- 4 counts: Revolve (second position).
- 4 counts: March to center of circle (first position).
- 4 counts: Kneel.
- 4 counts: Bow prostrate to ground.
- 4 counts: Raise arms to heaven.
- 4 counts: Bow prostrate to ground.
- 4 counts: Raise arms to heaven.
- 4 counts: Rise.
- 6 counts: Retire to outer rim of circle (first position).

Bow or continue marching in circle till music ends.

"Before the Image of Gold."—(Taken from "The Burning Fiery Furnace.")

Music, "Tarantelle," Stephen Heller.

(The idol is in the center. The maidens are divided into two groups and enter from opposite sides, one maiden following another. They hold their arms in front of them, elbows bent and hands stiffly forward.)

8 counts: Skip in and face the image of gold.

4 counts: Still facing the image, the two groups draw together. (Draw the outer foot across behind the inner foot; move the inner foot across in front of outer foot; repeat.)

4 counts: With fingers touching overhead each maiden revolves.

4 Counts: Still facing the image the two groups move apart (using the steps with which they drew together).

4 counts: With fingers touching over head each maiden revolves.

8 counts: Each leader, with group following, pass-

ing each other in front of the image, skips to form a semicircle facing the audience.

(Volumes I and IV of Hinman's *Gymnastic Dancing* may be found helpful. Published by Barnes & Co., New York.)

VI. PLAYCRAFT

If the producer care only for the interpretation of the lines of a play, he may give a very delightful performance; yet if he has failed to take advantage of the arts of scenery, lighting, and costuming, the play lacks an inherent charm. If his purpose is to present a harmonious whole, he will not only study the costumes, their color and cut, but also their relation to the background, the effect of the background on the spirit of the play, and the reaction of all to the lighting.

For instance, in "The Burning Fiery Furnace" (See *Bible Plays*), the chorus was clothed in blue and yellow. It was found impossible to have the lighting tried out on the day of the dress rehearsal; hence it was not discovered until the day of the play that the more glowing colors, the cerises and scarlets, intensified by the red lights from the furnace, would have improved the effect.

Influence of proper setting on effect.—In speaking of scenery, costuming, and lighting, and seeming to emphasize them, I do not wish to give a false impression. The interpretation of the lines in speech and action surely comes first, but is that a reason why it should also come last? One fault with the average child's play is that the producer has been content with so little. Because a thing is uncommercial, need it also be inartistic? If a child has known his lines and been able to enter upon his cues, it has frequently sufficed. Advancing a stage,

if the child has been brought to show any spontaneity, any intelligence in rendering his part, this has satisfied most of us. And this *is* a big step in advance. But even where a play is most intelligently rendered little attention has been given to the costuming, less to the scenery, and practically none at all to the lighting.

Why is this? Perhaps one reason is that children's dramas are of so recent development. Little has been



BABYLONIAN CHART

written for the children to act because the importance of children (save perhaps as a nation's soldiers) has not been recognized. But to-day the child is coming into his own; and, surely, the better, the more beautiful the thing which is given to the child, the greater will be his appreciation of beauty and his demand for excellence in later life.

Fortunate the producer who can be his own playwright, coach, costumer, carpenter, painter, electrician, and orchestra! Is there such a person walking at large?

I assume that *you-who-are-about-to-give-a-play* do not combine in yourself all these excellencies. No more do I! A few things I have learned and pass on, and one of these bits of wisdom is this: Enlist the aid of everyone you can, most especially the choirmaster, the clergy, and the janitor, and all other gifted persons, but let all be under one direction and that *yours*.

Though great improvement in scenery and lighting may under present building conditions be impracticable, at least with costuming all things are possible.

Make-up.—If giving a play in the church or chapel, it is, I think, better to use no make-up; in general, use only when you feel it will make a great difference. On a brilliantly lighted platform some make-up may be necessary, but never overdo it. A little brown paint, an eyebrow pencil, may sometimes improve pale little boys who represent fierce soldiers of old. I avoid lip-stick, or marking up the face. Whatever you do, you cannot disguise the fact that these are children; nor do you want to do so. For older groups more make-up seems allowable, but let it be too little rather than too much,

Wigs of full bushy hair, if obtainable, will add greatly to the appearance of ancient warriors, but if these cannot be obtained a fall of cloth will conceal the slimness of boyish necks. Beards should never be attempted save when the children are well grown, unless a humorous effect is desired. When these are used, crepe hair will provide the necessary effect of short beards at little expense. Buy at the costumers by the yard and attach to the face with gum-arabic, and trim to taste. This is removable with grease.

VII. COSTUMING

COSTUMING a play may be a very great bore or a feast, according to the spirit one brings to it. Is it a disagreeable necessity, or do you take an artist's joy in the handling of color and fabric?

Three ways of providing costumes.—Where costuming a play is attempted, it is generally handled in one of three ways. Either the costumes are all made at home, or all are rented, or these methods are combined. This last way madness lies. The discrepancy between the glory of tawdry finery and the simplicity of clean, homemade muslins will be too great. It will distract the attention. Flee this method. Better, far better rent all of the costumes! In this way, at least, the harmony which comes from seeing and choosing them all together may be obtained. But this method is expensive and vexatious. The costumes may not be altered, and they take away from the freshness of the child.

The first way seems to me by far the best. What if your costumes are not historically correct to the last buckle, as are those of the costumer? What you want is the spirit. Get into the spirit of the period and design your own costumes, without slavish attempt to copy, and your joy will be great. Be suggestive, not imitative. Be bold! Be clean!!

Costume planning and designing.—There are certain foundations which may be used for almost every type

of costume, for almost any period. Take this slip, or tunic foundation for your first play, and as you continue add what marks the distinctive country or period—the Egyptian sash, the Babylonian fringe, the shepherd's skin. If these foundation costumes are kept simple and of good, pure color, they may be used over and over again. Do not attempt overelaboration, overdecoration of these foundation costumes. Let variety come from fresh combination with hood or scarf or cloak. When these combinations tire, the foundation costumes may be dyed or stenciled, but do not overdo this. A little stenciling is enough.

In making your own costumes you also have this advantage: you may study them to fit your characters. You will have also the beginning of a dramatic chest. Advertise in church or neighborhood your willingness, your joy, to receive old curtains, portières, barefoot sandals. You will be given many a bit of chiffon or gold lace which you could not afford to purchase. For I am taking it for granted that the funds at your disposal are scant, and that simplicity will—fortunately—be a necessity.

But let it be a “joyous” simplicity and not a “niggardly” one.

By “niggardly” I mean “paper cambric.” It is cheap; it hangs clumsily; it comes in impure color. If the materials are too cheap, the effect is poor and the costumes last but for a moment. If the materials are good, the effect is gracious and the costume enduring.

Suitable and unsuitable materials.—By “good” materials I do not mean costly silks and velvets, though one

piece of coarse velvet, or gold tissue, for a king or queen, will make glad the heart. I mean cloths of good color and soft texture. Cheesecloth is excellent for some purposes but surely chilly for a cloak. Unbleached muslin is the best for foundations. In general, the near-white tones are better than the snow-white; the effect is softer. Voiles in good color, sateens, canton flannel, any woolen material, silk or cotton ratine, chiffon, crepe are all good, but flee tinsel and too much gilding.

The producer who asks each actor to furnish his own costume cares little for harmony. The result is apt to be sad. If the costumes cannot be made by one person or group, at least he should do the purchasing, and, if possible, the cutting. In this way the color scheme may be kept under control. This means choice of colors and color values.

Color schemes.—It is well to choose a prevailing color scheme for a play and to let that color predominate. In giving a certain type of play the producer may confine himself to one or two colors with great effect. A certain Christmas play was costumed in red, white, and green; the result was charming. But this applies to fantastic rather than to realistic plays. In Bible plays I feel that a wide range of colors should be used, letting one or two predominate. Thus in Egyptian plays, jade green or blue or purple might give the color note, in "Ruth" yellow and tan; in "David and Goliath" red. In costuming a group like the Satrap group in "Daniel" try out red, for instance. Let a variation of red be in every costume. Clothe the first Satrap in cerise and vermilion with sash of jade green; the second in vermilion and

blue with sash of orange; the third in orange, blue, and terracotta; the fourth in terracotta, purple and gold; the fifth in purple and scarlet. And all wear white and black caps. Each costume will thus connect with the others, and the clash of reds will be tempered by the cooler colors; though, indeed, if the colors be pure, there will be no clash. It is only when colors are dirty that they swear at us.

Where the Hebrews appear in a Babylonian or an Egyptian play, they may be confined to black and white and neutral colors as representatives of a more austere type.

When the color scheme has been decided, look well to the color values. Keep to the same tone throughout, either the baby colors, the clean, bright colors, or the dark. I myself prefer the medium range, the cerulean or bright blue, jade green, cerise, scarlet, vermillion, terracotta, orange, warm yellow, and purple, combined with black, white, and neutral colors. I avoid the pastel shades, baby-blue and pink, navy blue and crimson. If great delicacy of hue be desired for a group of maidens, use the flesh color pinks, the greenish blues and the violets. If the group be held together and does not mix spottily with the darker costumes, all will be well.

It will be found well to keep on hand several pieces of goods of pure color, of three-yard length, to serve as mantles, as couch or pillow cover, as decoration to throne or litter, or as Babylonian costume, one of orange, of purple, of blue, of vermillion.

Costumes may be dyed with Angel, Diamond, or other dye, or with soaps. Small pieces, such as caps and

fringes, may be dipped in gasoline and paint. Designs may be cut out of cloth of contrasting color and sewed or pasted on costume, or they may be painted with oil paint (permanent) or show-card colors (not washable). These latter cost about twenty cents a bottle and are very valuable to have on hand. Designs may also be drawn on the costume with colored chalk and painted over with the white of egg, which will darken the color considerably. Designs may be cut out of stencil paper (or any thick paper); the stencil must then be shellacked. Hold flat against the costume and apply paint with brush. Where gilding is required, use Vernis-martin bronze powder and bronzing liquid, as this will give the old-gold finish. Fringes may be the cheapest rug fringe, black jet, or the finest gold.

Care of costumes.—Provide each child with a bag with his name attached. In this bag place everything pertaining to his costume—cap, slip, cloak, sandals, bracelets, belt, crown. Let him be responsible for replacing these in the bag after each rehearsal. This minimizes the care of the costumes, especially if the child has been taught at home to fold his clothes. Of course hangers and separate cupboards are preferable, but what parish house will supply these?

There are many good pictures of biblical costumes. Tissot's illustrated Bible and the pictures of the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play seem to me the most helpful.

✓ **Hebrew costumes.**—The simplest costume consists of three yards of unbleached muslin or sacking. Double and sew up the sides to the arm hole. Cut a slit for neck.

A slit causes the costume to hang in good, irregular folds and is the easiest to make.

To this foundation sleeves, long and loose, may be added.

To the hem fringes may be sewed.



EGYPTIAN TASKMASTER AND ISRAELITE SLAVES

A great addition to this costume is to sew strips of black cloth the entire length. For instance, sew down the middle of the costume a strip eight inches broad; six inches distant on each side sew another strip four inches broad, or any width you please. (Of course *all* costumes should not be striped, only two or three.)

This costume may fall loose, or be girdled with a narrow cord or broad sash of contrasting color.

Over this, if desired, mantles may be thrown. These consist of several yards of material, prettier if fringed. These may be draped over the head, over the shoulder, and caught up over the arm.

A cloak of similar pattern to the foundation, but unstriped and with sleeves, open in front, may be used in place of mantle. Or over the foundation may be thrown a circular cloak with a hole cut for the head. This, stenciled in formal design, does well for kings, prophets, or prologues. Again, this throw-over cloak may hang to the hem in front and rear, but be narrowed to the width of the shoulders, and heavily fringed.

Squares of black cloth, about five inches square, may be sewed on the foundation, checkerboard fashion. This makes for variety. One only should be allowed, and that for a central figure, some bold, rebellious character, as this costume will insist on holding the center of the stage.

For the head use either a square or a longer piece of cloth, bound round with cord or bands of contrasting color. High caps, a little resembling the Turkish caps of to-day, but more conical, may be made of three or four triangular pieces of cloth stitched together. These may sit on the bare head or over the white head pieces.

Women's costumes should be somewhat similar to the men's, but should be of lighter materials and twice girdled, with the cloth puffed out between the girdles. A more delightful fashion is as follows: Tie a strip of cloth over the left shoulder and under the right arm, broad enough to make the sleeve (left). Take another

piece of goods, about three yards long. Fold in the middle. Stitch one side up to within about eight inches of where the cloth is folded. Stitch the other side half way. This makes a robe for covering the body and right shoulder. Slip head and left shoulder through larger opening, and tie with two girdles. The effect of this costume is especially good because of the flow of the material in irregular folds.

Veils should be long and thin and tied on with a cord. For the matron draw one veil under the chin and tie on top of head; throw another veil over the head and pin together.

For children the simplest kind of a slip will serve, fashioned like the foundation costume for men. They may go bareheaded.

Shepherds may be clothed in ordinary men's costumes, with the addition, if desired, of sheepskins. If the skins of animals are not available, eiderdown, fawn or cream color may be cut to resemble them in shape. Head, legs, tail may be roughly cut and the fur indicated with charcoal lines. These may be thrown over shoulder or bound to body. Cut the caps of the same material. With hood for pattern, cut them so that they rise to a slight point in the back and so that they fall an inch or so in front of and behind the ear. Cut out the ear.

Priests' caps may be cut of two pieces of buckram (see illustration) joined at base to fit head. Cover with cloth and sew a piece of brass, two inches by four across the front of the cap. Let the cloth covering the back fall to the shoulders and be fringed with gold.

Over the ordinary white garment throw a black robe,

cut short at the hip line. To this sew several rows of fringe. (This is but one type of priest's costume, and of the time of Jesus.)

Egyptian costumes.—These should be very clean and brilliant.

Two things are especially characteristic of the Egyptian costume—the collar and the loin cloth, ending in a broad flap in front.

For a children's play, however, a slip is necessary. By "slip" I mean a short, straight piece of goods doubled or caught at shoulders, with a hole for neck and short sleeves or none at all. Take such a slip and paint or sew on a broad circular collar. Paint on collar bands of different color, or sun rays. To a plain buckram belt attach a piece in front which broadens from three inches at the waist line to five inches at the hem. Paint to taste.

Another method is to take some two yards of thin, flowing material of color different from the slip. Gather it one half yard from the end of the piece. Holding gathers at front of waist line, wind the remainder about the loins, up under the gathers and tuck in at waist. Let the half yard fall over to hem and end with some motif.

Striped goods are especially indicative of Egypt.

For the head, take a square or oblong piece of cloth, at least twenty-four inches wide, draw the two front ends under the fall of the cloth and pin together at back, letting the resulting folds fall in front of the shoulders and frame the face. Small circlets of brass or copper, with a small piece resembling serpent's neck and head swelling up in front, add to the effect. The serpent's heads must be bent to curve forward.



BABYLONIAN

Babylonian costumes.—A slip may be used for foundation if desired, but the costume must be built up on the child. Take several yards of material, fringed on the ends and one side. Holding one end at middle of back or front, draw cloth tightly about the waist and pin so as to form a skirt. Then wind the remainder of the cloth about the body, across the front, over one shoulder, and pin to waist in back. Bring what is left over the other shoulder and tuck in at front. Hold costume together with a broad belt. A few stenciled designs on slip, drapery, or belt will add greatly.

High conical caps may be made of canvas, oilcloth, or any stiff material. Babylonian caps resembled the top of a tower, but I find conical caps cut in two pieces and sewed will give the effect. Brilliant white caps, decorated with gold and fringed with jet are effective.

Soldiers' costumes.—I merely hint at the difference in nationality.

Start with a slip, white, vermilion, purple, any strong color. Over this a Hebrew soldier may wear skins of wild animals, if obtainable. They add a certain barbaric splendor. These may be held in place by a buckram belt, black or tan, twelve inches in width. The ends are rounded and overlap. This in turn is held in place by a brilliant cord. Over the usual white headdress use the high conical caps and strong colored cord.

Egyptian soldiers may resemble the ordinary Egyptian, save that the stiff buckram belt, described under "Egyptian Costumes," should be used with or without loin cloth. His helmet should also be cut from buckram and painted. (For shape, see cut.)



EGYPTIAN SOLDIER

HEBREW SOLDIER

BABYLONIAN SOLDIER

The Babylonian soldiers may also resemble ordinary citizens, save that the belt should be broader and more like leather or metal.

For the Roman soldier use slip and belt similar to the Hebrew, but paint the belt as though it were composed of seven long strips of metal. Cut shoulder straps and attach to belt. Paint them as though composed of three strips of metal. Attach to the bottom of this cuirass, a kilt made of narrow strips of buckram. Helmets may be fashioned from old derby hats, or similar shapes may often be obtained at the five- and ten-cent stores. Cut pieces of buckram to represent the crest and side pieces which come in front of ears. Attach, and silver or gild the whole.

Chorus costumes.—In Hebrew plays the chorus may be clothed in Hebrew garb. A charming effect is secured by tying on the veils, Egyptian fashion, but instead of letting the folds fall straight, carry the ends around under the chin and over the other shoulder. Then attach the gold ornaments (tin pans, described under "Properties").

For Babylonian or Egyptian, though without authority, I use occasionally the long Turkish trousers, either falling from the shoulder or with separate waists of black and white checks or stripes, and use for belt a sash of flaming color or with a brilliant stenciled design.

The feet.—Bare feet are always the most charming, when suitable. For kings and queens, the spoiled darlings of all ages, children's barefoot sandals, or Japanese sandals will suffice. Soles may be purchased, and over the toes and instep tapes may be sewed and wound

about the ankle. Cut the heel and toe from socks and attach the sock by tape to the sole. If nothing better is available for the other players, use heel-less slippers taped and gilded. Anything is better than the modern shoe and stocking; but if stockings *must* be worn, that is if parents have not been educated to the beauty of bare feet, purchase white stockings and dip in a dye of flesh-color, not pink.

VIII. SCENERY

BIBLE plays may be given in church or chapel, in the parish house attached to the church, or out of doors.

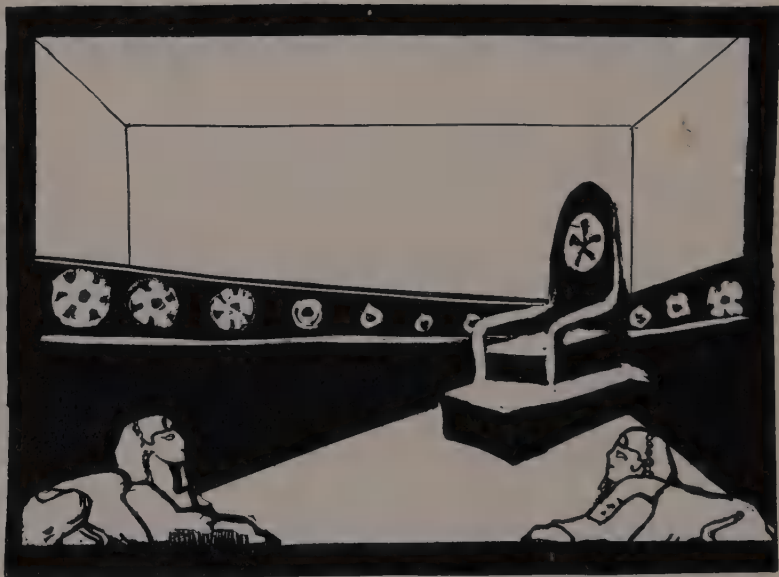
For the church or chapel it is probable that no scenery will be required or, indeed, permitted, save palms, Christmas or bay trees, or it may be stacks of grain. Many plays may be given charmingly without scenery. "The Golden Calf," "Abraham and Isaac," "Jephthah's Daughter," "The Judgment of Solomon," whose background is an altar, "The Call of Samuel,"¹ and many others may be given with no other background than the altar, and the effect of the beauty of stained glass and carving will add greatly to the play. In the play "Up, Up from Egypt," for instance, where no attempt is, or can be made to visualize the situation save in words, the long church aisle lends itself admirably to the passage of the Israelites over the Red Sea, while from the gallery at the back, if there be one, the triumphant chant of the Israelites sweeps down over the heads of the congregation.

Fitting the scenery to the play.—In a play like "The Nativity," which opens with the tableau of Mary, Joseph, and the baby, the prologue may act as curtain. Two children dressed in formal fashion, that is, with circular robes thrown over the head which are stenciled in formal design, may advance holding rods from which hang

¹ See *Bible Plays* and *Shorter Bible Plays*, by the author. The Abingdon Press, New York.

curtains. Stretching the rods so that they touch one another, the children may then recite the prologue (or the choir may sing), while behind the curtain the scene is arranged.

Certain plays call for out of doors. "Ruth" may well



A THRONE ROOM

be given within, but for real beauty should be performed under an autumn sky in a corn field. If you have no such field, create one. Get in a load of corn stalks. With dainty precision stick a poker many times into the ground across the back of the play space, inserting a stalk of corn in each hole. Then do the same across the front so

as to form a curtain which may be cut down by the reapers at the beginning of the play. Also place stalks of corn at random, so that the reapers and binders may wander through them. Arrange one or more stacks of corn, to which the maidens may bow according to the good old heathen custom; make a pile of hay on which Naomi may rest her weary body, and cover the whole inclosed space with golden straw. This, under a smiling sky, will give the play a radiance which will illumine it ever after.

Such plays as require sacrifices should also be given out of doors if possible, where, on a rough altar of unhewn (paving) stones, fire may be safely used. (See photographs of "Ruth" in *Bible Plays*.)

For a play not distinctively a harvest play, such as "Esther," the ground may be strewn with autumn leaves, and the wings be screened with boughs.

But plays like "Daniel," "The Burning Fiery Furnace," "Belshazzar's Feast," and many others require scenery. For the parish house play I offer the fruits of my experiments.

A concrete instance.—Let us assume that you have only a platform at one end of a room. Simple plays which require no scenery may be given here as in the church, merely by adding lines if necessary to get the characters on or off the platform. But plays which require scenic change require also a curtain. For these an arrangement may be made as follows:

Let the plumber insert an iron pipe (gas pipe) in the side wall, ten, twelve or more feet above the level of the front of the platform. Let this pipe cross the front of

the platform and be inserted in the other wall. Slip plenty of rings on this pipe as this is to hold the front curtain.

Three or more feet from each side wall let a semi-circular iron shaft join this front pipe and sweep around across the back, joining the front pipe again three or more feet from the opposite side wall. The center of this pipe should be attached to the ceiling several feet in front of the back wall. This pipe will hold the back curtain.

The space between the side walls and the pipe, and the back wall and the pipe will serve as wings. These should be as large as may be consistent with the space.

Of course square rather than semicircular pipes may be used which will increase the size of the acting space at the expense of the wings. The semicircular pipe, however, makes the space *look* larger and gives a more charming effect.

This is simple, inexpensive, and permanent. If kal-somined the color of the room, the pipes need not be unsightly.

The platform should be three or four feet high at the least, and should be approached by one or two small flights of steps, that players may occasionally enter through the audience.

The back curtain may be changed to suit the character of the play. These back curtains may be of any material, preferably soft and thick. Unbleached muslin, three yards wide, costs a dollar a yard; heavy duck one hundred and twenty inches wide, costs about two dollars. The latter is harder to handle but much more permanent.

Heavy ratine may also be used if found in suitable color, for it is too rough to take paint readily. If a deep blue curtain be used for background it need seldom be changed. It represents open sky, or it may be seen to advantage through window, arch, or door. Or, if a night scene be desired, stars may be cut from gilded cloth and pinned to it in regular pattern like a Fra Angelico fresco.

Painting your own scenery.—It may be that a good, deep-blue material at a moderate price may be found. After hunting for many, many years I have finally resigned myself to the necessity of painting the back curtain with powder paints. Although this may be painted with colors ground in oil, or Japan, and mixed with turpentine or gasoline, powder paints are the easiest and least expensive. They may not, however, be washed, but must be repainted when soiled.

Get a range of colors, perhaps several pounds of deep-blue powder (according to the size of the curtain to be painted), half a pound of light blue, yellow, green, white, black, red, and a pound of powdered or flaked glue. Mix the colors dry until the desired shade is obtained. Boil the glue in water and add sufficient to the powder to flow easily. Test to see that the powder will stick when dry, and that so much glue has not been used that the surface appears shiny. Stretch the material, tacking it to floor, wall, or anything which will hold it taut, and apply the paint. If painting a large space where monotony is to be avoided, mix several shades of the color, or of contrasting colors, and apply with different brushes, crossing the one color with the other. Thus in painting

a huge yellow wall one may make down strokes of purple, crossed by strokes of yellow and orange.

If afterward it is desired to paint these curtains with paint and turpentine, the powder paints will have given the cloth the desired "size," and they will take the other paint the more readily.

A choice among effects.—Other curtains besides the blue, or in addition, may be used. In a "Nativity" brown burlap or sacking may hang in clumsy folds to represent the stable, or they may part a bit in the back and reveal the blue back-drop beyond, set with stars. For a kingly scene a plain surface painted in Egyptian or Chaldean design is effective. Thus, for Egypt, a gray or fawn color drop with huge Egyptian figures outlined in black or terracotta, or with two sphinxes. Or the same with a square door cut in the center, revealing the blue sky.

Any curtain of pure beautiful color will do for background, but, in general, save for the necessary blue, neutral colors are best. The darker colors swallow the light.

The use of screens and walls.—Against the blue back curtain scenery may be built, if necessary, by erecting screens or flats. These wooden frameworks may be built by the carpenter the size desired. Six-foot screens by three and a half or four feet cost about two dollars. Cover these with unbleached muslin and paint to taste. Screens of different height may cross the platform, jutting back and forth to represent the walls of a city. One long screen tipped on its side may stretch two thirds of the way across the foreground to represent a low wall; then space may be left for a gate or a passageway

and another screen continue the wall out. The walls on each side of this passage way may be topped with some figure cut from wall or compo board to represent a heathen god, a winged lion (see cut).



STREET SCENE, BABYLON

These walls make a shallow stage against which costumes show to great advantage, especially if the wall be simple in tone. Keep everything flat. Do not attempt to paint anything in perspective. The walls may be covered with cloth painted gray, with a black coping pinned onto it, or black with a white coping or terracotta

with gray. A simple design, diamond shaped bits of cloth of a contrasting color, or the lotus flower, may be cut out and pinned as frieze to the wall. The possibilities are endless (see cut).



THE LIONS' DEN

Again, these walls need not stretch straight across the foreground, but may jut from the front corners of the platform back toward the throne in the middle of the rear or at one side, or toward the high place where a god is worshiped.

Arches are most effective. They furnish a delightful

lurking place for the Satraps to spy out Daniel, a charming entrance for the princes in Esther. Where the walls give way to the passage they may be joined by an arch cut out of compo board.

Screens may also be used to represent the lions' den. After hanging the blue back curtain erect the lions' den in the rear of your acting space thus: Place the flight of steps several feet in front of the back center. Let two screens four or five feet high slant from these steps to the rear corners. Across the top of the steps, connecting screen with screen, place a smaller screen for door, attached to one side with hinges so it may swing outward. Cover all with cloth, but let the door be cut so as to represent a grating through which a part of the den may be seen. Or cut all to represent a grating if desired and if your lions are presentable. Then if you wish, paint the walls with a frieze of Assyrian lions or some other symbol (see cut).

Realistic effects.—A frieze of Assyrian lions may be painted on sign-cloth (a stiff cloth one yard wide prepared for paint, twenty-five cents a yard) in red and gold, blue and gold, or any color, and hung about the entire stage. Or the lions may be cut from wall-board with a small saw or wood-carving knife, painted brilliantly and placed in the extreme foreground.

The placing of any object, such as lions, trees, pillars, in the foreground tends to give depth to the scene, especially if they stand silhouetted black against the light, and if there be a light in the extreme background to draw the eye.

The "Burning Fiery Furnace" may be built, as is the

lions' den, but the back curtain should be of brilliant pink or scarlet to reflect the glow of the fire. In trying out this play black was used, but, as mentioned above, it was found to absorb all the light. If lions of wall-board are set on top the furnace walls, they will stand out effectively.

Wall-board, beaver-board or compo-board, as it is variously called, is a very thick cardboard, obtainable at art departments. It may be used as a substitute for screens, but it is more destructible and more expensive, thirty-two inches by seventy-two inches costing \$1.20. It is, however, invaluable where an arched door, lions or sphinxes are required, and also in the building up of rocks.

Rocks may be built by piling packing cases of various sizes one on top of another, and tacking to the edges bits of wall-board shaped to represent rocks. The whole may then be covered with sacking, a very cheap form of burlap, and stained with powder paints, here a bit and there a bit of blue, gray, green and purple.

Another method of securing effects is the use of curtains on wires. This is simpler than the use of screens though not so good, as the best of wires frequently sag. Draw, say, four wires from wall to wall, several feet apart, across the top of the stage. Starting from one side, pin the curtain, which is to represent a wall of a city or a dwelling, perhaps two feet along the front wire, then straight back to the third wire. Pin along the third wire for several feet then draw it forward to second wire, along that, then back or forward according to desire. These dimensions are all relative to the space and the

effect you wish to secure. The curtains should be tacked to the floor as they fall. Or, if you please, the curtain may stretch straight across from wall to wall, with several feet cut out along the top to show the sky beyond.



WALLS ON WIRES

Windows may be painted on this curtain in bright blue, yellow, purple, if a garish effect is desired, or windows and arch may be cut out and outlined in a stronger color.

Mechanical devices.—These wires may also be used to support pillars and tree trunks. Cut wide strips of shiny or painted cloth the desired height. Attach top and bottom to wire rings, the kind which come with Christmas

wreaths, or to barrel staves. Fasten to wires at top and tack to floor at base. This sort of pillar is the safest for Samson to pull over the ears of the Philistines. It is only fair to say, however, that such pillars are extremely shaky and only to be attempted by the stout of heart.

Tree trunks may be long strips of canvas or any stiff cloth painted a purplish brown. Suspended from the wires, they stand out against a flaming sunset or a night sky with the effect of an autumn wood.

Purely decorative little trees like those of a child's Noah's Ark, or a conventional Christmas tree, are sometimes very charming. These should be cut by the carpenter and painted the green desired, with black trunk and standard. They may be also cut to represent bay trees and do well in a formal scene such as the banquet hall in "Esther." Real bay trees, when they are to be had, decorated with small oranges, add much to the picture. Artificial box and bay trees are good but expensive.

A very charming effect is obtained by building a sort of upper platform across the back. This may easily be done by boards on trestles, and approached by the flight of steps. As a terrace for a kingly scene, as a judgment seat, it is good and aids tremendously in the grouping. It might also represent the lions' den, or Joseph's pit, into which Daniel or Joseph may be lowered by ropes.

For the outside of a village street, a plain gray wall, with outer stair (costing about eight dollars), is a great asset.

Tents may be sketchily indicated in the following manner (all proportions are of course relative to space):

Take a piece of canvas eight by ten. Down the length of this, pin broad stripes of a contrasting color, terra-cotta against blue or black against cream. Pin the middle of one end of the canvas against the back curtain about seven feet high, letting the remainder of the width of the cloth fall unnoticed. Draw the length of the canvas forward four feet and down, letting it fall over a screen six feet broad by four feet high. A foot or so in front of the screen tack the ends to the floor eight feet apart; tack the cloth once or twice between and cut huge scallops, imitative of effect of tent ropes. Cut a slit for entrance and fasten one side back with a cord.

If a tent jutting out from the side be desired, follow the same directions, but fill up also the triangle of side, floor, and canvas.

If the effect of a shelter is desired, under which the maidens, companions of Jephthah's daughter, may work on embroidery frames, or under which a fruit vendor may display his wares, let the screen be higher and the cloth rest upon it, ending in a fringe.

Representing a mountain.—Perhaps it is desired to represent Mount Sinai or the mountains of Abraham's sacrifice. Experiment with the following directions: The illusion may not be perfect, but at least it will be interesting. Do not paint a lot of mountains in perspective; that is easy and old-fashioned. Cut the mountain out of wall-board as high as possible. Cut two mountains perhaps, the one to stand a few feet in advance of the other. Color these blue or gray with streaks of green or purple. Place them at the extreme rear against the back curtain. Throw your back light behind your moun-

tain if you have but one, or between the two mountains. Hang a curtain of thinnest green or blue-green tarlatan in front of them. Place several stiff little pine trees against the tarlatan; these will catch the front lights. Then, if possible, place a few taller trees, thin at base, in the extreme foreground, silhouetted black against the mountains. This use of trees and lights tends to give the effect of distance. It may sound like a useless bit of trouble, and will probably only be played with by the producer who adores every phase of the work.

Preparing the platform for several scenes in succession.—Frequently the scene may be set for several acts at once. This will ease the strain of changing with inadequate means. Thus, in "The Burning Fiery Furnace," Act III, the furnace may be concealed by the blue back curtain, which, hanging in the middle, furnishes the background for the image of gold, Act II. In front of this, low walls, topped by Assyrian lions, represent Act I, a scene in Babylon.

Or simple curtains on wires may be drawn across the middle of the scene to conceal the set for a later act.

All of these details, however, are for the producer who has time and energy; in general the keynote is all that is necessary. In giving the play of "Daniel" I decorated the stage with pillars, with frescoes of Assyrian lions, with orange trees, in short with everything of like nature I could manufacture, and the effect was injurious. Therefore choose one or two bits of decoration only, and keep the effect one of simplicity.

IX. LIGHTING

EFFECTS may be obtained with good lighting as in no other way, and with the smallest, least expensive equipment. Lighting renders mysterious, or radiantly illumines; it marks the passage of hours; it intensifies the mood of the piece; it does so many things of which we are barely conscious. Once contrast the giving of, say, a fairy play with fixed lights with the same play given with softly dimmed lights of blue and green, the lights growing and flickering upon the fairy wings, and you will give more serious attention to lighting.

Lighting effects easily produced.—Yet in the giving of biblical plays lighting has generally been the last consideration. Everyone knows of the wonderful lighting effects obtained at larger expense; everyone does not know what excellent effects may be obtained with very simple means. Unbleached muslins, dyed or painted, wrung out in cold water and dried, while still twisted in folds, make a wonderful background curtain, when subjected to a strong light. A red light causes a red curtain to glow like flame; a blue light enhances and gives a depth of atmosphere to a blue curtain. (Therefore always have a blue light thrown upon the back curtain.) A green light gives a sense of mystery and fairy-like unreality, while an amber light makes for naked truth.

Let us suppose you have only one source of light, a plug in the wall. This single circuit has a capacity of six hundred watts. This amount of power will light ten

sixty-watt lamps. Use all of it. The simplest and least expensive improvement will be the cluster light. Purchase a cluster light with as many sockets, up to ten, as you can afford. (A three-socket cluster will cost \$1.30.¹) Connect by wire (five cents a foot) with the circuit. Place the cluster in a deep tin pan, which will serve to increase the light by reflection, and set where it will throw the best light. Bulbs of any color may be screwed into the sockets, but the light will be stronger if amber or white lights be used with gelatine slides on top of them. (The sheets of gelatine cost twenty-five cents and the holders cost twenty-five or fifty-five cents, according to size.) It is generally best to set the light and manipulate the slides from behind some obstacle on the platform which will conceal you. Sunrise may be obtained as follows: Start with darkness. When the switch is turned on have a blue and a red slide over the light. Slip off the blue, leaving the red for an early sunrise light. Slip a green slide over the red and slip the red off. Slip a blue slide over the green and the green off. Slip an amber slide over the blue and the blue off, and the day has dawned. **EXPERIMENT!**

The usual small place of entertainment has, however, more than one plug in the wall. Most of them are glaringly lighted with a row of foot or overhead lights on one circuit. With these it is feast or famine, all or nothing. There can be no change of color, no dimming or enhancing of the light during the act.

Securing color effects.—If these strip-lights are on three or four circuits, there is a greater range of possi-

¹ Prices obtained in Chicago, 1922.

bilities. Colored bulbs may be used, a color to a circuit, amber, red, blue, or green. By switching off the circuits one after another a certain effect of dimming may be secured. (If you cannot obtain the colored bulbs, coloring fluid may be obtained at seventy-five cents a bottle. The clean bulbs may be dipped in the liquid and, if the lights are turned on, will dry quickly.)

Simple lighting devices.—An overhead strip-light is, I think, preferable to footlights. The light is more natural and it permits of more action on the front of and across the stage. A strip-light made of zinc costs \$2.25 per foot. Each socket costs seventy cents. The cost of an eight-foot strip with sixteen sockets would be \$23.60, the wiring extra. Arrange these on four circuits. Have the wires from the first, fifth, ninth, and thirteenth sockets joined to one switch; the wires from the second, sixth, tenth, and fourteenth sockets joined to another switch, and so on, and all connected with the switch box off stage. This will make an excellent beginning.

Another exceedingly desirable arrangement is the bunch light, a kind of glorified cluster light. These cost \$25 complete, but are much more satisfactory. They consist of movable standards about six feet high, ending with a flat piece of zinc, about two feet square, with tin reflector. From this project varying numbers of sockets. There is also a device attached which will hold in front the gelatine slides. This may be operated from the side or from any place of concealment.

The spot-light, designed to throw a certain portion of the scene into bright light, has its value, especially for fantastic performances, but is not a necessity (\$16.50 to

\$35). It has this charm, that it can bring into strong relief the central note in your picture. Thus, in giving "The Nativity" in a huge church it will probably be desirable to focus the light upon the manger group. Here a spotlight, or an automobile light, or a stereopticon may be used, if lanthorn light is not sufficient, letting the scene melt away into the shadows.

Use of the dimmer.—The greatest joy is a dimmer in connection with the strip-light. Nothing but unfailing persistence and an unconquerable spirit will procure a dimmer. You will be told that the cost exceeds the value. Do not believe it. Know the joy of the artist when you create the evening and the morning of the first day. There will be no need to bother with destructible gelatine slides. They are operated from a separate dimmer box, a dimmer to each circuit. The cost is \$15 to \$40 per dimmer, according to the quantity of light used.

Turn a lever, and a pale pink flush creeps over the background. Gradually, very gradually as you turn the second lever, the pink is conquered by pale green, yielding in turn to amber—or anything you wish. So few people know the looks of a sunrise that you may be audacious in the handling of colors. You may produce the effects of a storm, or of the light thrown by leaping flames. Until you have them it is impossible to realize the possibilities.

For your own joy, the ecstasy of a child with a new toy, get dimmers if they are obtainable.

An overhead strip-light on four circuits, with dimmers, and a horizon strip-light, like to it, make for almost a perfect equipment.

When plays are given by day, and there is a sunny window with a shade, the shade may understudy the part of a dimmer with mild success, that is, if the sun consents to shine.

Producing fire effects.—Where the effect of fire is desired, as in a sacrifice or in “The Burning Fiery Furnace,” place a bit of bright blue paper under the bulb or cluster, and attach red and yellow bulbs. Flicker the light on and off. Smoke may be obtained by experiment as follows: ¶ With hands protected, saturate two sponges, the one in ammonia, the other in muriatic acid. Let the fumes meet, either by blowing them through tubes, or in some such fashion, and throw the resulting “smoke” in the direction desired, using a hand fan as bellows. This is harmless and very effective. ¶

Lightning.—Lightning may be obtained by attaching a high-power bulb (on the scene) to a resistance coil (behind the scenes). Scratch a bit of metal across this coil, and lightning will result.

There are many plays which do not, of necessity, require change of lighting. “Jephthah’s Daughter,” for instance, may be played with a fixed light, but there is hardly a drama which may not be improved by the play of color. As the maidens wind down the mountains in the sacrificial dance, let the lights of late sunset fade into the blues of evening. In the scene on the plain of Doura let the sky be dark on the rise of the curtain; then let the light gradually grow on the horizon, throwing the statue of gold into dark relief, until the front lights announce full day.

X. PROPERTIES

THERE are a few properties, the stock-in-trade, so to speak, of a Bible play, which it is well to have on hand. These are spears, shields, swords, shepherd crooks, a crown, pitchers, goblets and jars, a throne, a flight of small steps, and a few benches and stools of the simplest design.

Of course these may be rented with the usual annoyance and expense, or purchased if the cost does not deter. Some it is impossible to make yourself; others with a little ingenuity may be fashioned at home.

Homemade properties.—If you order spears made by the carpenter, stout pieces of wood, four or five feet in length and topped with a wooden spearhead, you will have something durable which the children in their play are not likely to break. Brass spearheads may be purchased and attached to old broom handles gilded. The spearheads may be cut from sheet tin, filed and attached. Simpler still, flag-staffs may be used, but these are very frail. A large tassel attached to the top of the spear adds greatly to the effect.

Ordinary small swords may be purchased at slight expense; larger swords may be ordered from carpenter and silvered. Curved swords may be cut from sheet metal of sufficient weight and attached to a cross piece of wood. The wood must be cut with a jig-saw to resemble the handles of scimitars such as are seen in Arabian Nights pictures.

Shields may be fashioned from barrel tops, old trays,

or bread-pan covers. Handles of leather or metal must be attached. Very large shields may be made as follows: To a lath some three or four feet long attach three branching laths about two feet long in the manner of a trellis, top, middle, and bottom. Hold the ends together with a lath on each side. Attach strings to the ends of the laths, drawing them together in the manner of a bow. Cover with stiff cloth. Thus you will have a huge shield slightly curving. Attach handle and silver or gild. Some bold, striking design may be painted on. Cardboard and gold or silver paper are to be deprecated on account of their destructible quality.

Shepherd crooks may be fashioned from willow wands—so they say. I have had no success in the making, therefore I should advise the carpenter, or purchase. These are almost a necessity because of their picturesque quality.

Properties made from metal.—The metal properties may all be made with ease and enjoyment with the aid of sheet metal (to be obtained at the hardware shop), tin shears (be sure that they are sharp), hammer, nails, paper-fasteners, and beads, or small glass jewels. One crown with simple points must be kept on hand; others may be wrought to suit the Babylonian or Egyptian fashion. Place the design on the sheet metal, cut and join with paper-fasteners. These may be hollowed by pounding in a wooden bowl with a round-top hammer, or they may be jeweled if so desired. Place the metal against a solid bit of wood, drive two holes with nail wherever you desire a jewel, and thread them to the crown with fine wire.

Bracelets are dear to the children and effective on the arms of soldiers and kings if they are kept simple and massive. Cut out of sheet brass or copper, fashioning one end like a hook, and slitting the other end to form the eye.

Bead chains of good color or gilded may be used. For massive chains thread button molds and gild.

One of the most delightful of all properties is the fan carried by the slave behind his lord or mistress. If you possess peacock feathers or ostrich plumes, these may be sewed to stiff buckram and attached to the end of a gilded flagstaff. If you do not possess these in quantity, a fan may easily be cut from sheet metal (see illustration), painted with Egyptian design and tacked to a pole. Red, black, and silver, blue, black, and gold, are effective.

Old-fashioned lanthorns may be cut from coffee cans. Draw circles, squares, or oblongs over the can. Drive a hole in the center of each with hammer and nail. Insert tin shears and cut out. Stick a bit of a candle inside, or insert an electric candle (or bulb with wire connection), and fasten a small chain across the top. Take a three-foot pole and insert a hook some six inches from one end and attach the lanthorn. Paint the whole black. The resulting light and shadow will give a charm wholly out of proportion to the labor involved. In a Nativity play the light may be left almost entirely to the lanthorn or lanthorns, with the resulting effect of some old picture, if bulbs be used. Attach the wire along the pole with adhesive tape (purchasable at any electrician's) and connect with the circuit. The bulb may be veiled with a bit of a gelatine slide, or colored paper. Of course

the range of the light is limited; the lanthorn cannot be carried too far from the circuit or the wires will be evident, but if no other light be used it is only the lanthorn which will be seen. If the light be set down slightly above and behind the manger, it will give all the light required.

Earthen-ware utensils.—If there be a potter handy, old, beautifully shaped jars may be obtained, but in general makeshifts must be used. The undecorated china in the art departments will serve, but this is costly. Good shapes may sometimes be obtained of the green florist's ware, painted black, white, terracotta, or gilded. Vessels of brass and copper may be found at old junk dealers. It is well to keep the eyes open and purchase one or two when found. Old waste paper baskets, if of good shape, may be covered with terracotta cloth, and carried on the shoulder.

Goblets for a feast may be glass goblets, gilded; for the peddler's stock in trade, the largest size milk bottles, painted if desired, and bound about with criss-cross cords of bright string or raffia. Four or five of these strung together create the illusion.

Providing a throne.—Possibly you have a chair in your possession which will do for a throne. Any stately, simple old chair, with a brilliant bit of cloth thrown over it, will suffice. If you have none, build a throne out of a packing box and stretchers. Place box for seat. To the back tack a tall stretcher, to the sides, small ones. Paint or cover with cloth. Or, for the back and sides, use wall-board cut to resemble Assyrian lions, Egyptian sphinxes, or merely sloped.

This throne may be set on a low table for dais, but if you are able, have a real dais made. If the table is used, it must be approached by a small flight of two or three steps. These steps are of use in many ways, whether as footsteps to a throne, to the lions' den, or "The Burning Fiery Furnace." It is well to have them made by the carpenter so they may be strong. A few benches or simple stools are almost indispensable.

Candlesticks.—Candlesticks, such as those in use in "Belshazzar's Feast," may be made as follows: Have a heavy base, about sixteen inches square. Fasten to center of base a four-foot upright, two inches by two. Fasten a crosspiece three feet long to top of upright, and attach the ends of this by side pieces to the upright about eighteen inches from top. Make seven sockets in the crosspiece to hold the candles. Wax candles may be used if there is no scenery; otherwise there must be electric connection.

"Tables of Stone" and idols.—In making the Ten Commandments, mix plaster-of-Paris to the consistency of molasses and pour into a shallow box cover about twelve inches by twenty. As the mixture dries, round off the top with a knife to resemble the pictures (see illustration).

Idols, such as the Golden Calf, may be cut from wall-board and fastened to a plank; they may be obtained from a statuary company, or they may be molded from plastic clay. Take a tin can, the shape of a calf's body (syrup can); drive four sticks into the corners for the legs of the animal and tack them to a board. Have this foundation firm. (An art store will furnish you better

materials for this skeleton structure.) Then bit by bit build up the calf. The children will love to assist in the building. Gild the whole, and hang about its neck garlands of roses.

Or, if you prefer, the shapes of idols may be cut from sheet tin, and modeled in bas-relief.

Scrolls.—For scrolls cut a length of oil-cloth or sign-cloth, three feet by twelve or fourteen inches. Attach to two small gilded poles several inches wider than the cloth. These poles may be capped with the ends of curtain rods. For clay tablets such as those in use in Babylon, flatten plastic clay against cardboard. Use wooden skewer for stylus.

XI. WRITING A BIBLE PLAY

"THERE are no rules for writing a play" (William Archer).

Let me therefore join with Aristotle, who, says Archer, never says, "You must," but suggests instead, "You had better," letting the bonfires of my own mistakes serve to light others. And, differing from the prophets of old, I will not say that my way is the only perfect and God-given way, for I hope and trust I shall progress. But such light as I have received, I give.

Your own attitude of mind.—"You had better" choose that Bible story which has always charmed you. "You had better" visualize that story, especially if you think to produce your own play. "You had better" be very certain, if the play be for children, that the story stresses a wholesome ideal. "You had better" be on speaking terms with your end from the beginning, being sure that your theme is dramatic.

In choosing the story for dramatization, whether the interest lie in the character of the hero, as, to my thinking, in "Joseph," or in the tale, as in "The Judgment of Solomon," or in the idea, as in "The Burning Fiery Furnace," or in all three, as in "Daniel," be sure of your own delight in the story, or it may be you will fail to produce delight in others. To write, primarily, for any other reason than joy, is the surest damper.

But if a story like the contest of Elijah and the proph-

ets of Baal is that which fascinates your imagination, are you able to deal with fire descending from heaven? Does the passage of the mighty tribe of Israelite slaves, pursued by Pharaoh's host with glittering spears through



HEBREW

the piled-up waters of the Red Sea kindle your fancy? Can you picture the Red Sea? Or Samson, crushing together the brazen pillars over his enemies? Or Noah's flood? Can you represent these, realistically or symbolically? Is it necessary to do so in order to tell the story? May they be described through chorus or messenger? Or may they be simply left to the imagination without too grossly defrauding the expectations of the

audience? (In "Daniel" children *will* expect the lions' den.)

One play which was handed in for criticism demanded the following scenery: First scene: A king's palace. (Obviously heaven, from the context.) Scene II: Bethlehem, the stable. Scene III: Calvary, the cross. Scene IV: Again the king's palace, or heaven. *This might be difficult.*

After due letting of the mind play about the situation, possibilities present themselves, and what at first sight seems out of the question, becomes practicable, but obviously there are limits.

Theme and action.—It will depend entirely upon your own thinking whether miracle stories, or stories of cruelty, like that of Jael, or martial stories, like David and Goliath, are considered desirable if writing for children; but whatever the story be, let it have *action*. Finished performers may give a play of "Job," but hardly, I think, amateurs.

There is physical action and there is mental action. Both may be intensely dramatic, but is not the expression of emotion, with a minimum of physical action, beyond the capacity of most children? The part of the cobbler in Tolstoy's "Where Love Is, There God Is Also," is a part of intense and quiet emotion. I have seen a little girl of eleven play this wonderfully, where she failed in such violent parts as King Robert of Sicily; but she has always seemed an exception. Most children (like their elders) vastly prefer acting to thinking.

What is dramatic?—Some say that anything is dramatic which you are able to present, which will hold the

attention or stir the emotion of your audience. Baker says: "Drama is the presentation so as to move an audience to responsive emotion, of the kind desired by the dramatist." There are many events in the Bible which may be represented dramatically without being in their structure dramas. Such stories as "The Nativity" and "The Good Samaritan" make delightful walking dialogues, but as to that which constitutes a drama authorities differ.

Aristotle says that a play must have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Freytag phrases it, "The wrong, the complication, the adjustment."

Archer, commenting on this, observes that in every crisis of real life there is the rhythm of rise, progress, and culmination, but that he would not condemn or bar from the stage all plays which lack a decisive ending.

The need for a beginning is obvious; the middle is sure to follow, but as to the end, it seems the part of wisdom to have it in mind from the beginning. Even if the end be no ending, but wander off vaguely into space, still hold it by the hand.

Freytag and Brunetière alike assert struggle to be necessary to drama, yet Archer points to "As You Like It." Does its charm depend on struggle? Surely not!

He defines drama as a series of crises, or "the art of crises," the dramatic quality of each crisis depending on the intensity of the emotions.

To Baker "dramatic" means the creation of an emotional response.

Possibilities inherent in the story.—Be it all as it may,

if you have a good story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, you are fortunate; if a story with many little crises, do not despair, but beware of the story which causes no emotional response and which leads nowhere.

Take the story of "Jephthah" as illustration of Aristotle's definition, and the movement, as defined by Freytag.

Situation: Jephthah, a man despised by his brethren as the son of a harlot, brooding and eager for leadership, lives apart with his dearly beloved daughter.

Beginning: The fortunes of war force his brethren to call upon him for assistance. He joins them under pledge that leadership shall be his.

Rise of action: To make secure that leadership, he vows a vow, that if God will give to him the victory, he will sacrifice that living thing which issues first from his doors to greet him.

Climax: He triumphs in battle. Upon which the consequences immediately follow.

The falling action, or consequences: He returns to his home and his daughter issues first to greet him in festal dance.

According to the Bible story, she surrenders to his will, yet must this be immediate? Surely it is here that the story is most capable of dramatic treatment, of study, for here the emotions are at their highest pitch. Here is the real struggle, not bodily but mental. His love for her, and his vow; her obedience and her shrinking from the flames of sacrifice. Or the struggle may be between Jephthah, who shrinks from fulfilling his vow, and his followers, who demand it.

End: Her submission and his decision to sacrifice her according to his vow.

Of course all this need not be presented on the stage; we may begin at the end according to Greek precedent and rehearse the tale from the beginning, presenting only the final conflict.

Take the tale of "Esther" as illustrating Archer's definition.

Situation: The Jews are captives in Babylon. The king is in search of a queen.

Rise: Mordecai, a Jew, determines to exalt his people by making Esther, a Jewess, queen.

Crisis: The choosing. Esther is chosen by the king, leading to—

Crisis: The revelation by Mordecai to Esther, and by Esther to the king, of the plot of the conspirators. The king sentences them to hang, and exalts Haman as Lord High Chamberlain. This leads to—

Crisis: Haman's decree that all men bow down before him. Mordecai refuses. This leads to Haman's plot against the Jews. He obtains an edict from the king, commanding his subjects to slay the Jews on a certain day. This leads to the plot of Mordecai and Esther to save their people. This leads to—

Crisis: Esther's appearance before the king. He pardons her boldness. (It seemed to me allowable to let Esther be the one to suggest to the king the reading of the history of his reign in which he first discovers that it was Mordecai, a Jew, who had revealed the plot against him and so saved his life.) This leads to—

Crisis: The king's interview with Haman, and

the demand that Haman honor Mordecai. This leads to—

Crisis: Haman's declaration that Mordecai is already hanged. Esther's emotion at hearing this betrays her nationality. At the king's command, Mordecai is brought from the gallows and honored by Haman.

Catastrophe or end: The queen's feast, at which the queen denounces Haman. This leads to his death and the exaltation of Mordecai, and consequently, of the Jewish nation, the end for which he had wrought.

As illustration of the story which leads nowhere, or rather, the ending of which is unsuited to our stage, take "Naboth's Vineyard."

Situation: Ahab, the king, desires Naboth's vineyard.

Beginning: Naboth refuses to sell. Ahab plots against him to take his life.

Middle: Naboth is slain in battle. Ahab enters into possession. Then come the consequences, the denunciation by the prophet Elijah and the humiliation of Ahab. But is his humiliation the end to the tale? Is it sufficient catastrophe? It seems to me that the end is the fulfillment of the prophet's words: "So the king died and was brought to Samaria—and the dogs licked up his blood—according to the word of the Lord which he spake."

Structure and writing of the play.—In writing the play—I am giving you a few words of wisdom I have culled from wise books of old—it is well not only to know the end but also to prepare for the end from the beginning. In the story of "Belshazzar's Feast," for instance, Darius and the Persian army should not come as a sur-

prise at the conclusion of the play, but should be made known to us in the beginning as the sword in the hands of Jehovah. The beginning is also the place where all possible explanations should be made and all possible characters make their bow.

"No dramatic material is independent of something presupposed."—Freytag. Whether it be much or little, something has to be told the audience as to the place of the play, the time, the nationality, the cause of the existing trouble, or the uneasy forces which are to breed the conflict.

There are many devices. There is the ancient method of letting the chorus or messenger speak the prologue, acquainting the audience with all it should know. In writing a tiny play in which all must be compressed into the shortest possible time, a prologue has its uses, especially if the play be given in church without scenery or program. There is the slightly more modern method of the gentlemen of Shakespeare's earlier plays, or of the parlor maid and butler of French drama, the two characters who strut across the stage, the well-informed one instructing the ignorant (otherwise the audience) as to all that occurred before the curtain rose. Many variations have arisen out of this method, and artists struggle to conceal the artificiality of the beginning.

After making clear the situation, the struggle begins, the rise to the conflict of the supreme action, the decision which determines the latter part of the play. In "Daniel" it is the prayer; in "The Burning Fiery Furnace" it is the refusal to bow to the golden image; in "Belshazzar's Feast" it is the drinking from the holy vessels. This is

the middle of the play, the place where one character or group comes out triumphant either for good or evil.

Then come the consequences, the falling action leading to the catastrophe. This ending may be retarded to increase the suspense. For instance, in "Jephthah" some excuse may be brought forward for the nonfulfillment of his vow, or in "Daniel," the king may for a time refuse to be bound by the law of the Medes and the Persians.

As to the final catastrophe, Freytag advises: "Avoid every unnecessary word; leave no word unspoken which is needed."

Set rules of little help.—"There are no rules for writing a play." Almost any suggestion may be defied by genius. Each will write according to his nature whether it be tidy or haphazard. Blessed indeed are those who are able to write a complete scenario and then elaborate. Yet a scenario is almost a necessity. At some stage it must be either thought out or written, and will probably grow out of much thinking and much erasure. Some scenarios grow out of chance bits of dialogue; these suggest developments.

One might think that in the taking of Bible stories the scenario is given you complete. Such is almost true of "Esther," but of how few others! Incidents must be invented, omitted, strung in a certain sequence for stage purposes. We cannot present all the windings of the tale of Joseph. (One old French play of "Joseph" begins with the arrival of the brethren in Egypt, before Joseph, Lord Governor.) In "Daniel" we must call upon the imagination for incident.

A bit of advice.—Yet, though there be no rules, on one

piece of advice I think all the wise ones agree: Keep the clay of your composition plastic as long as possible. Do not press the soil too firmly about your little thought-seedlings until you are sure they are in the best possible position, according to your understanding. I have found it well to scribble: "X *might* enter here," "Y *might* refuse to do so and so." "*Perhaps* it would be more in character for Z to leave abruptly." For if you write "X enters," X will, in all probability, continue to enter at that particular moment, as long as the play endures, although his room is preferable to his company.

Study your characters; they may grow startlingly unlike the usual conception. Are they, on better acquaintance, as you had always supposed them? Was Moses perfect when he looked this way and that way and saw no one, and hid the Egyptian's body in the sand? Did God command Abraham to slay his son? Abraham had grown to manhood among the idolaters; was he influenced by their belief that the gods took pleasure in human sacrifice? What did the Jews think about Nebuchadnezzar's command that they bow them before the image of gold? Did they yield meekly? Did some hesitate? Let the characters talk on paper before your scenario is quite complete; you may discover a gold mine. Mr. Baker says, that to hold a situation, "a dramatist must study his characters in it till he has discovered the entire range of their emotions in the scene." Do not bind your characters too closely to a preconceived model; they themselves will frequently suggest the happiest bit of your play.

Room for initiative.—Yet all this at your peril! Dare

to have a concept of the character of Joseph as not all perfect, but as developing and attaining its perfect flower in response to Judah's offer to accept slavery in the place of his younger brother Benjamin, and your idea will be evil spoken of. To some, Joseph was perfect from his mother's womb. The whole interest of "The Burning Fiery Furnace" lies to me in the character of the three Jewish princes. If the characters are as unbending as granite, where is the drama? But to another there is no drama, and all flows smoothly as a wedding feast—or funeral.

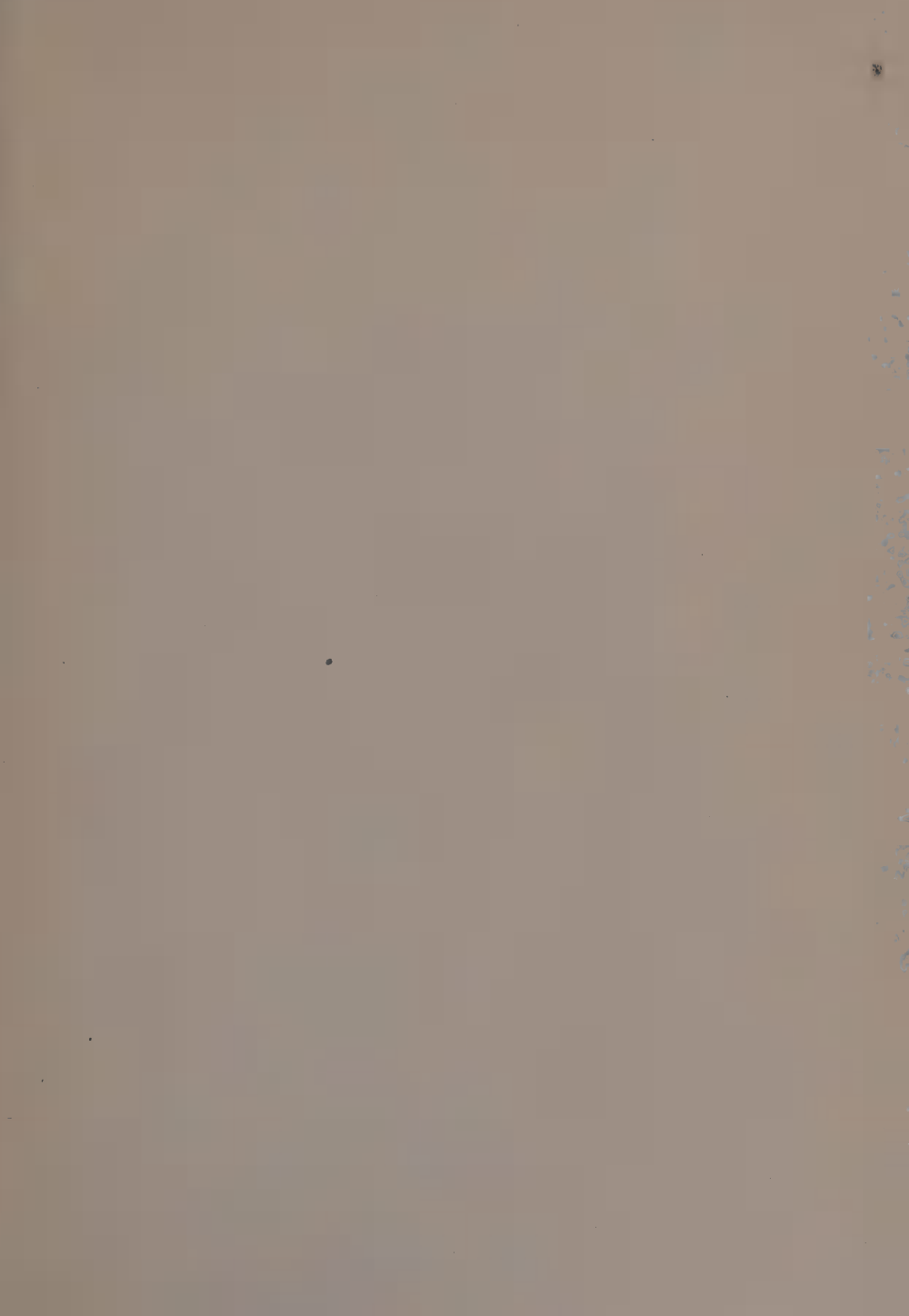
Where it is legitimate to change and where we shall offend, who shall say? To my thinking, details of time and place and circumstance may be altered, but nothing which will vitally affect the spirit of the story, unless it be a legitimately new conception of character.

It may be that it is desired to adapt an indoor play to out-of-doors, that is, to give a play without curtains. In this case the characters must make entrances and exits not provided for in manuscript. In some instances this may be accomplished without words. Shepherds may quietly enter as though with browsing sheep, or pointing at the sky, as though strange events were happening. But consider the feast at the beginning of "Esther." Is it possible for the princes to enter in silence? Either a song or entrance lines must be provided. There is a feeling in certain lines which carries a character on or off the platform, a certain rhythm of movement. "The Lord be with you!" in greeting is an obvious example; "Come and let us go!" an equally obvious line of departure. But there are more subtle ones. Try it out on yourself if

necessary. Walk off to a certain line and see if you can do it with ease—a simple test.

Boiled down to essentials, the suggestion of this chapter is, Read over the story carefully; look up references; shut up the Bible. Think it over constantly. Plan the end. Then write as it comes to you, beginning in the end, or the middle, or any place you please and fill in. Go back to the Bible and use the biblical language, quoting where possible. Where the conversation is of everyday affairs, I do not hesitate to use modern colloquialisms, but I dare not recommend this.

The conclusion of the whole matter.—Finally remember the old irritating dictum, irritating because so difficult to follow: "Make the first act clear, the last act short and the whole interesting" (Dumas). Or, as some one else has phrased it, "The first interesting, the middle disturbing, and the end tranquillizing."



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